MICHAEL D. SWARTZ

Scholastic Magic

Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism

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Michael D. Swartz

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For Bernard and Marcella Swartz

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PREFACE

THIS STUDY came about as a result of my interest in unfamiliar dimensions of Judaism in late antiquity and their social and historical context. I believe that the Hekhalot literature constitutes important evidence for the range of social and cultural groups within rabbinic society. In my reading in the social sciences and the history of religions, I have also become convinced that ritual and mystical texts can best be understood by paying close attention to their specifically cultural background; my book *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism* reflects this conviction. Several years ago, it occurred to me that it would be fruitful to analyze two elements in Hekhalot literature that could be indicators of its authors' relationship to society: ritual, which can tell us much about the mythic universe of its authors, and which can also give us clues about how they stood in relation to the rabbinic halakhah; and concepts of tradition and authority, which can help us understand their social position and self-conception. It seemed to me that analyzing these factors could be a way of testing the thesis that Merkavah mysticism derived from the circles of the early rabbis against internal evidence.

In the course of gathering the evidence for such a study, I came to realize that these factors, ritual and tradition, were concentrated primarily in one strand of Hekhalot literature, the Sar-Torah and related texts. Because I believe that the study of ideas in Hekhalot literature begins with literary analysis of the texts themselves, I decided to focus on these texts. This led me to a consideration of the Sar-Torah phenomenon itself, and a wish to understand its own concerns and background, and in turn to the themes of revelation, memory, and the relationship of magic to the scholastic ethic. This book thus became not only a study in the social background of ancient Jewish mysticism, but an exploration into forgotten aspects of ritual and revelation in the rabbinic milieu.

Portions of Chapter 6 appeared in my article, "Like the Ministering Angels: Ritual and Purity in Hekhalot and Magical Literatures," in *AJS Review* 19 (1994): 135–67; Chapter 7 appeared as "Book and Tradition in Hekhalot Literature," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1994): 189–229.

Many friends and colleagues have provided valuable advice and intellectual stimulation for this project. At the University of Virginia, I benefited a great deal from conversations with Professors Gary A. Anderson, Carlos Eire, David Novak, and Robert Wilken, and I have learned as well from my students in graduate seminars. The members of the Society of Biblical

Literature's Consultation on Asceticism in Greco-Roman Antiquity discussed many of the issues related to ritual and purity in this literature. Professors Moshe Idel, Isaiah Gafni, and the late Jonas Greenfield of the Hebrew University were particularly helpful during a very fruitful year of study in Jerusalem. I am grateful to the Yad ha-Nadiv/Rothschild Foundation for providing a fellowship for that year. The University of Virginia also provided summer research grants and research leave for this project. Professor Elliot Wolfson of New York University gave valuable advice and encouragement, read the manuscript in its entirety, and offered many incisive comments and criticisms. I have also had stimulating discussions with Professors Martin Jaffee of the University of Washington, David Halperin of the University of North Carolina, and Tirza Meacham of the University of Toronto. Professor Lawrence Schiffman of New York University discussed this project and the issues it raises with me from its inception and has, as always, been an invaluable colleague and friend. My thanks to Ann Himmelberger Wald, religion editor at Princeton University Press, for her interest in this book and her enthusiasm and thoughtfulness in seeing it to publication. Thanks are due as well to the editorial staff at Princeton University Press, including Eric Schramm and Sterling Bland, for their patience and conscientiousness, and to Sylvia Coates and Kevin Osterloh for preparing the indexes. Quotations of excerpts of manuscripts from the Taylor-Schechter Genizah collection, MSS. TS K1.21, TS K1.28, TS K1.96 and TS K1.117, appear with permission of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit of the Cambridge University Library. I consider myself especially fortunate in having a family that supports and inspires me. Most important are my wife, Suzanne Silver, and our children, Amira and Sivan, who have by their lives made deep contributions to this work. I am also honored to have my brother Steven as a friend. This book is dedicated to my first teachers: my parents, Bernard and Marcella Swartz.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*
EJ	*Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971)
ER	*Encyclopedia of Religion* (1988)
FJB	*Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JANES	*Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
Jastrow, *Dictionary*	M. Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JE	*Jewish Encyclopedia*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*
PGM	Karl Preisendanz et al. (eds.), *Papyri Graecae Magicae*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
REJ	*Revue des études Juives*
TS	Cambridge University Library, Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection

PART I

Introduction

Chapter 1

MENTALITIES OF ANCIENT JUDAISM

> Modern scholars are often disappointed by the apparently lowly, working-day status accorded to imagination in medieval psychology—a sort of draught-horse of the sensitive soul, not even given intellectual status. Ancient and medieval people reserved *their* awe for memory. Their greatest geniuses they describe as people of superior memories, they boast unashamedly of their prowess in that faculty, and they regard it as a mark of superior moral character as well as intellect.
> —Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*

THIS BOOK is a story of imagination in the service of memory, of magic in the service of scholasticism. In the visionary literature of the talmudic period, there are several texts that concern the conjuration of an angel known as the Sar-Torah, the "Prince of the Torah." This angel is said to bestow upon a person an extraordinary memory, prodigious skill in absorbing what he has learned, and esoteric knowledge of the cosmos and heaven. Most of the texts are stories of how ancient sages conjured that angel, who transformed them into great rabbis. Those secrets, say the texts, are available to the reader, who can become as learned as they merely by following the rabbis' magical instructions.

Like the intellectuals in Mary Carruthers's study of memory in the Middle Ages,[1] rabbinic Jews in ancient Palestine and Babylonia revered sages whose authority and holiness lay in their ability to memorize and retain sacred law and lore. The Sar-Torah literature can tell us about how these values influenced the popular religion, magic, and pneumatic spirituality of the time. These texts also play an important role in the history of Judaism in late antiquity, and can help us understand who the ancient Jewish mystics were.

The Sar-Torah traditions are set into a remarkable corpus of Hebrew and Aramaic texts known as the Hekhalot literature. This literature, which has received a great deal of attention in recent years, took shape in Pal-

[1] Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

estine and Babylonia in the period of the classical Talmuds and midrashim and afterward, from the third to eighth centuries, C.E. It is preserved mostly in medieval manuscript traditions stemming from Germany, Italy, and the Middle East. The best-known texts in this corpus are pseudepigraphic accounts of the ascent of a second-century rabbi, usually Rabbi Ishmael or Rabbi Akiba, through the chambers of Heaven, the Hekhalot, to the chariot-throne of God, the Merkavah. Many of these texts are based on the visions of the heavenly throne depicted in the books of Ezekiel and Isaiah.[2] Also prominent in the corpus, however, are texts, such as the Sar-Torah literature, about the cultivation of angels who bring practical benefits to people on earth.

We are only beginning to understand the significance of Hekhalot literature for the history of religions. It is of value to students of religious phenomena and behavior because of its place in the history and study of rabbinic Judaism and Jewish thought, and because of the distinctive conceptual and literary problems it presents. Little is known about the social environment of the rabbinic estate in late antiquity. Hekhalot literature is evidence for trends and groups within Jewish society who were related to that of the founders and leaders of rabbinic Judaism in complex ways. Moreover, its peculiar variations on rabbinic theology, ritual, and scholastic values can shed light on the worldview of those rabbis.

This study is an exploration of central themes in Hekhalot literature—Torah and wisdom, tradition and authority, and the ritual process—through an analysis of the Sar-Torah and related texts. Its aim is to find out what these texts can tell us about the social and historical context of their authors, and to demonstrate how culture, tradition, and society operate in mystical and magical systems. In the course of this enterprise, we shall uncover aspects of ancient Judaic thinking that this literature reveals.

Approaches to History

Alasdair MacIntyre, in the opening pages of *After Virtue,* asks us to imagine a cataclysm in which all the works of scientific progress had been destroyed, leaving only a few scattered, fragmentary documents.[3] The society living in its aftermath would try to reconstruct the sciences from the remaining fragments, and eventually convince themselves that what they had developed were, in fact, those sciences. MacIntyre likens that scenario to the relationship of contemporary moral philosophers to their moral tra-

[2] On the relationship of Hekhalot literature to interpretations of Ezekiel see David J. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988); on this work see below.

[3] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 1–5.

dition: "What we possess, if this view is true, are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived."[4]

MacIntyre bases his moral argument on a historical one. The moral argument is that to understand the sources of moral life that our society values it is necessary to reconstruct their cultural context. The historical argument is that the complex cultures that modern Western civilization considers to be its heritage are known to us only fragmentarily since the Enlightenment. This study is concerned with the historical issue implied in MacIntyre's scenario rather than the moral one. If we wish to understand the religious ideas of premodern civilizations such as that of ancient Judaism, we must be prepared to reconstruct the cultural universe that those cultures inhabited, in all their apparent familiarity and alienness. This exercise is important, for while the historical study of rabbinic Judaism and its environment has preoccupied scholars for more than two centuries, we do not always question certain basic assumptions we have about the way ancient Jews thought.

Historians have recognized this larger problem for several decades, and its implications have penetrated most fields of historical research. Many historians look to the social sciences to ask whether the cultures we study differed from ours in fundamental ways of thinking. In the study of religion, this has meant increased attention to cultural anthropology for methodological models. In the study of classical and medieval history, this has given rise to what is called the *histoire des mentalités,* in which historical sources, including literary texts and archival documents, are studied not only for political and intellectual history but for information about basic facts of everyday life, including rituals, popular physiology and psychology, and the subtleties of social distinctions.[5] This method stresses that the study of history requires the discovery of the assumptions governing those societies that we do not share.

Two ways in which this program can be carried out are of interest to us here. In one type of study, a single figure, incident, or cultural norm is investigated in order to decode its conceptual background. Interesting examples can be found in Robert Darnton's collection of essays, *The Great Cat Massacre.*[6] Here portraits of individual events or texts—a bizarre riot in a print shop, a set of fairy tales—are deciphered for what they say about

[4] Ibid., 2.

[5] For general considerations of this approach, see Jacques Le Goff, "Les Mentalités, une histoire ambigue," in *Faire de l'histoire: nouveaux problèmes,* ed. J. Le Goff and P. Nora (Paris, 1974), 3:76–94 and Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990), 253–92.

[6] Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Book, 1985).

the ways of thinking that undergird them. These studies are influenced by, among others, Clifford Geertz's interpretive approach to the study of culture.[7] They often focus on a single detail that seems strange to the modern reader. As Darnton explains, "When we cannot get a proverb, or a joke, or a ritual, or a poem, we know we are on to something. By picking at the document where it is most opaque, we may be able to unravel an alien system of meaning."[8]

In the second type of study, by no means unrelated to the first, a pervasive element of a premodern society that had previously been neglected is brought to the foreground. Influential, if controversial, examples of this approach are Phillip Ariés's studies of ideas of childhood[9] and death in the Middle Ages.[10] Another example, from a rather different perspective, is Mary Carruthers's work on memory quoted above. A prominent recent example of the influence of this approach on the study of late antiquity is Peter Brown's *The Body and Society,* in which he frames early Christian attitudes toward the body and virginity within Greco-Roman physiological conceptions of male and female. For this background Brown relies on ancient medical literature as well as conventional sources of intellectual history.[11]

This study seeks to draw from both of these approaches. It is an account of one phenomenon and literary corpus that represents wider, more pervasive aspects of ancient Judaism. In it, we find the conjunction of memory and magic, two cultural modes that permeated ancient and medieval Mediterranean and Jewish civilizations, the importance of which has only recently been recognized.

How can the study of the social and cultural environment of rabbinic Judaism make use of this strategy? One way to do so is to examine a phenomenon in which seemingly disparate elements are juxtaposed. Such jux-

[7] For the anthropologists that influence this approach, see Darnton, *Great Cat Massacre,* 283–84. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 412–53, is often cited as a classic example of this method.

[8] Darnton, *Great Cat Massacre,* 5. Cf. n. 13 below.

[9] Phillipe Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life,* trans. R. Baldick (New York: Random House, 1965). For a critical assesment of the book's arguments and influence, see Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 216–31. Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), discusses Ariés's studies of childhood critically in the light of Jewish sources.

[10] Phillipe Ariés, *Western Attitudes Towards Death From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). On this book and the issues in the history of religion raised by it, see Carlos Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), prologue.

[11] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

taposition is at the heart of the comparison of religions, and serves the process of "defamiliarization" by which we see a culture in a new way.[12] This is one reason why the alliance of rabbinic scholasticism with ritual magic that occurs in the Sar-Torah literature is of interest. This literature also bears on two aspects of classical Judaism that deserve reexamination: the role of ritual and what it implies about the efficacy of religious action, and the nature of the scholastic praxis that lies behind the intellectual process the rabbis call Torah. Each of these issues plays a central role in how rabbinic Judaism has been perceived. Ritual action, codified in halakhah, has long been recognized as essential to rabbinic Judaism. So, too, the study and transmission of Torah are understood to be at the heart of the rabbinic enterprise. Yet Jewish ritual can go beyond the requirements of halakhah, and the act of studying Torah is not as simple as it might sound.

The Sar-Torah literature sheds a distinctive light upon these elements of rabbinic Judaism. The Sar-Torah texts describe rituals that draw from central rabbinic norms regarding purity and liturgy, but also attest to religious goals and mythic dynamics that seem to be at odds with those norms. The texts also invoke tradition for their validation, in peculiar variations of the rabbinic concept of tradition. We can use those variations to illuminate the nature of rabbinic claims to authority. Moreover, these texts apply their magic to the central rabbinic activity—the study of Torah. By seeing what it is that Torah entails according to this tradition, we can discover unfamiliar dimensions of this essential idea.

Rabbinic Mysticism?

Although the historical program described above has increasingly informed the study of ancient Judaism,[13] Gershom Scholem's monumental

[12] The concept of defamiliarization is used by Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays,* ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 3–24, to describe the fundamental function of art. Jonathan Z. Smith applies this idea to the comparison of religions; see *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), xiii; cf. also Michael D. Swartz, "The Strange in the Midst of the Familiar: A Thematic Seminar on Sacrifice," in *Tracing Common Themes: Thematic Courses in the Study of Religion,* ed. John Carman and Steven Hopkins (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 101–12. On juxtaposition as a defamiliarization technique see Smith, *Imagining Religion,* 19–35; and idem, "Narratives into Problems: The College Introductory Course and the Study of Religion," *JAAR* 56 (1988): 735–36.

[13] See most recently Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "Who's Kidding Whom? A Serious Reading of Rabbinic Wordplay," *JAAR* 55 (1987): 77–95, which pays attention to the problem of mentality in relation to rabbinic Judaism, and Daniel Boyarin, "Literary Fat Rabbis: On the Historical Origins of the Grotesque Body," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 1 (1991): 551–584, which cites Darnton's insight quoted above. Interestingly, both studies deal, in different ways, with the disparity between modern notions of humor and those of Jews in antiquity. A systematic study of this topic has yet to be written. For an example of the type of study that

recovery of Jewish mysticism as a pervasive element in Jewish history has had a similar effect. Before Scholem and a few of his contemporaries brought legitimacy to the historical study of Jewish mysticism, the subject was often dismissed as bizarre, irrational, and foreign to true Judaism.[14] Scholem and his colleagues showed that it was impossible to understand Jewish cultural history without recognizing the extent to which mystical theology and hermeneutics pervaded ancient and medieval Judaism.

The study of Merkavah mysticism has played a key role in this argument. Until Scholem rescued the Hekhalot texts from obscurity several decades ago,[15] they languished in medieval manuscripts and anthologies of minor midrashim.[16] Although nineteenth-century scholars had written about this literature, treating it mainly as an example of an esoteric trend outside the normative Judaism of the early Middle Ages,[17] Scholem assigned it a key place in the history of Judaic thought. Here, he maintained, was the first significant stage in the history of Jewish mysticism. This phenomenon, which came to be known as Merkavah mysticism, represented according to Scholem the mystical discipline of cultivating a vision of the divine throne, reached by travel—known as "ascent" or "descent"[18]—through the seven Hekhalot, the heavenly palaces or temples. Furthermore, this literature is

investigates an aspect of medieval Jewish society that was at once pervasive and influential yet often taken for granted by historians, see Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education.*

[14] On earlier historians' conceptions of Jewish mysticism and Scholem's historical argument, see David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). To be sure, before Scholem there were nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars who treated Jewish mysticism as a subject for serious historical study. See, for example, Paul Vulliaud, *La Kabbalah juive: historie et doctrine,* 2 vols. (Paris: E. Nourry, 1923); Adolph Jellinek, *Beitrage zur Geschichte der Kabbalah* (1852; reprint, New York: Arno, 1980); and A. Franck, *Die Kabbala oder Die Religions-Philosophie der Hebräer* (Leipzig: Heinrich Hunger, 1844).

[15] Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism,* 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1954); idem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition,* 2nd ed. (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965).

[16] Aaron Jellinek, *Bet Ha-Midrash* (Leipzig, 1878; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1967); S. Wertheimer, *Bate Midrashot,* 2nd. ed. ed. A. Wertheimer (Jerusalem: Ktab Wasepher, 1969).

[17] See, for example, Heinrich Graetz, "Die mysticsche Literatur in der gaonischen Epoche," *Monatsschrift fur Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 8 (1859): 67–78, 103–118, and 140–153.

[18] On the term *yrd,* "descend," for the journey see Scholem, *Major Trends,* 47; cf. Ithamar Gruenwald, *From Apocalyptism to Gnosticism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988) 170–73; cf. also Annelies Kuyt, "Once Again: *Yarad* in Hekhalot Literature," *FJB* 18 (1990): 45–69. Elliot Wolfson, "*Yeridah la-Merkavah:* Typology of Ecstacy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies,* ed. R. A. Herrera (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 13–44, suggests that the term refers to the entry to the throne and enthronement of the traveler at the last stage of the journey. While this theory is suggestive and illuminates many passages, the term *yrd* will be translated as "descend" in this study in order to allow for the range of interpretations.

intimately related to the classical rabbinic texts. In fact, Scholem argued, Merkavah mysticism derives from the central circles of the ancient rabbis, the tannaim and amoraim of the first centuries C.E.[19]

Scholem thus placed the Hekhalot literature on the agenda both for students of the phenomenology of religion and historians of ancient Judaism. If the Hekhalot texts were composed by the most important rabbis of the early talmudic period, the history of rabbinic thought needed to be rewritten. If they were evidence for mystical theology and practices, the student of religion had to account for their peculiar language, pseudepigraphic attributions, and other cultural properties.

In recent years the study of Hekhalot literature has grown considerably. Due to new editions of the corpus and new textual methods for dealing with rabbinic and cognate literatures, the nature of this literature has been the subject of debate. This discussion bears on both the historical and phenomenological issues Scholem raised.

Historical Issues

With increased interest in Hekhalot literature, Scholem's theories about its historical origins have undergone reexamination. The most important development has been the research of Peter Schäfer, who through his *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* and other publications has prompted a renewed inquiry into the literary and historical character of Hekhalot literature.[20] In addition, David Halperin's form-critical analysis of passages in rabbinic literature about the Merkavah has shown that the texts considered to be evidence for the practice of ecstatic mysticism by the early rabbis do not support such a conclusion.[21] Studies by Martin S. Cohen, P. S. Alexander, and this writer have shown that individual Hekhalot texts cannot be dated in their entirety to the first centuries of the common era, but were the result of a process of evolution that spanned the centuries from early amoraic Palestine to post-talmudic Babylonia.[22] These studies arise from close,

[19] Scholem, *Major Trends,* 44; idem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 8.

[20] Peter Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981); idem, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984). On the implications of these publications for the study of Hekhalot literature, see below. The Hekhalot texts of the *Synopse* are translated in Peter Schäfer, *Übersetzung zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987–91).

[21] David J. Halperin, *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1983). Halperin's thesis builds on an earlier article by E. E. Urbach, "*Ha-Masoret 'Al Torat ha-Sod bi-Tequfat ha-Tanna'im,*" in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem,* ed. E. E. Urbach, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, and Ch. Wirszubski (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1967), 1–28 (Hebrew section).

[22] Martin Samuel Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983), idem, *The Shi'ur Qomah:*

systematic reading of the Hekhalot texts themselves. They emphasize using internal evidence for the historical theses advanced, and make use of recent developments in the methodology of reading rabbinic and related literature, such as form criticism. They also pay attention to the difficult textual problems this literature presents.

If it is no longer certain that the Hekhalot literature as we know it goes back to a mystical tradition at the center of the rabbinic movement, it remains to be determined how to place its authors. It is generally agreed that they were not members of any organized antirabbinic sect known to us; they attributed their texts to the ancient rabbis and are familiar with many details of rabbinic exegesis and law. There is little external evidence for their place in Jewish society.[23] Therefore we must rely on the texts to help us address those questions. This effort, which in part animates this study, also must be seen in the context of a larger discussion of the social history of rabbinic Judaism.

Contemporary historians have tended to look at the rabbinic period in two basic ways. One, following a more traditional type of historiography, tends to see rabbinic Judaism, as expounded in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds and classical midrashim, as a single culture and as the religion of nearly all Jews in ancient Palestine and Babylonia.[24] Another view, one of the earliest proponents of which was Erwin R. Goodenough, was to see rabbinic Judaism as the product of an isolated elite with limited cultural influence on Jews outside of the academy.[25]

Both views, however, presume a two-tiered model of Jewish society in

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Texts and Recensions (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985); P. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 223–315, idem, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *JSJ* 18 (1987): 40–68; and Michael D. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma'aseh Merkavah* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992). Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* advances an extensive argument against Scholem's thesis that ecstatic throne-mysticism was practiced by the early rabbis. Scholem's view is accepted by Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), and Meir Bar-Ilan, *Sitre Tefillah ve-Hekhalot* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1987); cf. C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "Hekhalot literature and Talmudic Tradition: Alexander's Three Test Cases," *JSJ* 22 (1991): 1–39.

[23] Talmudic texts relevant to the phenomenon are analyzed in Halperin, *Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature.* An important responsum by the eleventh-century rabbinic leader Hai Gaon is discussed in Chapter 6. Another early witness is the tenth-century Karaite Salmon b. Yeruḥim's anti-rabbanite polemic, published in Israel Davidson, *The Book of the Wars of the Lord* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1934), which includes a diatribe against the Sar-Torah myth; on this text see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 518–22.

[24] See, for example, Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975).

[25] Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953–68). Cf. Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* (Leiden: Brill, 1965–70).

late antiquity, counterposing a rabbinic elite with the inchoate masses, often identified with what the rabbis called the *'Am ha-'Areṣ* (literally, "people of the land"). Recently, though, there has been increased recognition that ancient Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish societies were complex ones, encompassing tensions between circles within the rabbinic estate, and between the academy and other sectors of the population.[26] This more nuanced view of ancient Jewish society mirrors recent research into social dynamics of Western religions in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, in which the earlier picture of inert "elite" and "popular" religions is revised.[27]

Hekhalot literature plays an interesting part in this debate, although its implications have not always been made explicit. Because Scholem saw Merkavah mysticism as a phenomenon at the heart of rabbinic Judaism, it was seen as the esoteric spiritual expression of the academy. By this account, many of the great leaders of the early talmudic period practiced visionary mysticism as they were ruling on matters of civil and ritual law.[28] But this notion has been disputed by many current scholars. Scholem's

[26] Although Jacob Neusner does not examine the evidence for other classes in Jewish society in the talmudic period, he is a major advocate of seeing rabbinic literature as indicative of several "Judaisms" and not of a piece. Among his vast oeuvre, see Neusner, *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981). The existence of tensions between the Babylonian academies and the Exilarchate is described in Neusner, *Babylonia,* and Isaiah M. Gafni, *Yehude Bavel bi-Tequfat ha-Talmud: Ḥayye ha-Ḥevrah ve-ha-Ruaḥ* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1990); see also idem, "*Shevet u-Meḥoqeq—'Al Defuse Manhigut Ḥadashim bi-Tequfat ha-Talmud Be-'Ereṣ Yisrael u-Vavel,*" in *Kehunah u-Malkhut—Yaḥase Dat u-Medinah be-Yisrael u-va-'Amim,* ed. Israel Gafni and Gabriel Mutzkin, (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1987), 79–91; cf. Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak ben Zvi; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989), on tensions between the patriarchate and the rabbinate. See also Chapter 8 below.

[27] See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 12–22; Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretaion in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 99–100; Natalie Zemon Davis, "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion," in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion,* ed. Charles Trinkaus with Heiko Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 307–35; and idem, "From 'Popular Religion' to Religious Cultures," in *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research,* ed. Steven Ozment (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), 321–41.

[28] This depiction concurs with a fundamental insight into the nature of mysticism that emerges from the study of Jewish mysticism: that law and mysticism can be intimately related. Throughout the history of Jewish mysticism we can find mystics who are also leading halakhists and mystical writers deeply concerned about halakhah. See, for example, the case of Joseph Karo, the author of the *Shulkhan Arukh,* on which see R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). Cf. Daniel C. Matt, "The Mystic and the *Miẓwot,*" in *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible to the Middle Ages,* ed. Arthur A. Green (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 367–404.

argument was based in part on evidence from the Tosefta and the Talmuds. As stated above, it has been questioned whether this evidence in fact supports his conclusions.[29] A key argument from internal evidence was that passages in Hekhalot literature—especially a story in *Hekhalot Rabbati* about the deposition of Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah from heaven—demonstrate detailed knowledge of rabbinic halakhah.[30] Yet when this and related passages are examined, a more complex picture emerges, in which rituals in Hekhalot literature vary in subtle but important ways from their halakhic counterparts.[31]

The most direct recent challenge to Scholem's thesis that Merkavah mysticism constituted the spirituality of an early rabbinic elite has come from David J. Halperin. In his important work *Faces of the Chariot,* Halperin builds upon his earlier conclusion that tannaitic sources do not support Scholem's early dating of Merkavah mysticism.[32] Halperin calls into question the picture of an ancient rabbinic elite whose exoteric, legal activity hid an esoteric, visionary praxis of ascent to heaven. His alternative explanation is that this literature was the product of the *'Am ha-'Areṣ,* the lower classes of rabbinic society, and served as a protest against rabbinic authority.[33] While designating the authors as *'Am ha-'Areṣ* does alert us to the possibility that they were not the central shapers of rabbinic Judaism, there is still much to learn about the context of the literature. It should be remembered that the term *'Am ha-'Areṣ* is a product not of sociological analysis but of an internal rabbinic taxonomy that determined social location according to observance and study of halakhah.[34] Moreover, Hekhalot texts reflect varying degrees of education and sophistication, indicating that their authors may not have come only from the lower classes.[35]

Peter Schäfer, on the other hand, has suggested recently that the literature was the product of a "post-Rabbinic elite."[36] It is probable that

[29] See n. 21 above.

[30] Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 9–13; cf. Saul Lieberman, "The Knowledge of *Halakha* by the Author (or Authors) of the *Heikhaloth,*" in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 241–244.

[31] See Chapter 6.

[32] Cf. Halperin, *Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature,* and Urbach, "*Ha-Masoret.*"

[33] See Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 382–83.

[34] See Levine, *Rabbinic Class,* 112–17, on the variety of rabbinic attitudes to the *'Am ha-'Areṣ,* and 117–27 on the rabbis' relationships with other social groups; cf. also Aharon Oppenheimer, *The 'Am Ha-aretz* (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

[35] See also Martha Himmelfarb, review of Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot, Critical Review of Books in Religion* (1990), 342.

[36] See Peter Schäfer, "The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism," in *Hekhalot-Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988), 293; cf. idem, *Hidden and Manifest God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 159. This phrase probably refers to leadership groups that flourished after the close of the Babylonian Talmud, in the Geonic era or afterward. However, it should be remembered that the rabbinic class persisted in its efforts to influence

the Hekhalot literature developed from the late amoraic times to post-talmudic Babylonia.[37] The Hekhalot literature was transmitted after that time to the *Ḥaside 'Ashkenaz,* the medieval German Jewish pietists who could indeed be described as a post-rabbinic elite. However, it is unclear who composed and transmitted the literature before them.

An interesting approach to this issue was taken by Gerd Wewers in an article analyzing the introduction to *Hekhalot Rabbati,* one of the most important Hekhalot texts.[38] This introduction claims far-reaching powers for the person who learns the *Hekhalot Rabbati* tradition. Wewers concludes that the authors of the hymns were educated Jews who saw themselves as an elite with social and thaumaturgic powers. However, Wewers advises caution in extrapolating from this self-conception to the actual social situation of the authors.[39] Wewers's program—of examining the self-image of the authors through testimonies such as the introduction to *Hekhalot Rabbati*—is a useful one. This study takes a similar approach by analyzing evidence for attitudes to authority and tradition in the corpus. However, this study suggests that when we examine how some of the authors and redactors who received this literature wished to use it, their relationship to halakhah and the rabbinic ethos, and the social function of their use of ideal figures, we cannot fully support either the view that these passages were written by an elite or that they are the product of a lower class of *'Am ha-'Areṣ.* These findings suggest that there are social and historical dimensions to the evidence for Judaic society in late antiquity that deserve to be explored if we are to arrive at a more complete picture of ancient Judaism.

Phenomenological Issues

As we have seen, Merkavah mysticism gained importance in the study of ancient Judaism through Scholem's description of it as the first significant manifestation of Jewish mysticism. But to characterize Hekhalot literature as mystical is to enter an ongoing debate that concerns not only Jewish mysticism, but the study of mysticism in general. Several of its literary and

other segments of the community well into Geonic times. Thus tensions between rabbinic leadership and other groups could have continued past the time of the redaction of the Talmud.

[37] On dating of Hekhalot texts see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 216–20, and the studies cited there; Schäfer, *Hidden and Manifest God,* 8, suggests a relative dating of Hekhalot texts that indicates a range from the late talmudic period to well into the Geonic era.

[38] Gerd Wewers, "Der Überlegenheit des Mystikers: Zur Aussage der Gedulla-Hymnen in Hekhalot Rabbati 1,2-2,3," *JSJ* 17 (1986): 3–22. The introduction appears in §§83–92 in the *Synopse.* On these hymns see below.

[39] Wewers, "Überlegenheit," 21–22. Wewers does note (p. 21) that the hymns assume a hostile social environment.

historical characteristics test our preconceptions about the nature of mysticism. Is mystical literature primarily a literary rendering of ineffable experience, or are literary convention and activity primary to the phenomenon? Is the mystic a type of anarchist, subverting convention and going against society's grain, or a traditionalist, bound by conventional pieties? Hekhalot literature, with its striking descriptions of visions, its emphasis on the individual's encounter with God and divine beings, and its numinous poetry, presents an interesting case study in these questions.

The Sar-Torah literature is relevant to this debate because of its focus on ritual, its conceptions of tradition and society, and its conception of knowledge that is at once esoteric and practical. Moreover, the Sar-Torah phenomenon is intimately bound up with the literature and phenomenology of Jewish magic. The study of magic has come to play a key role in our understanding of religions in antiquity. The study of the Greek magical papyri, the development of ideas of theurgy in late antiquity, and the status of magic and healing practices in early Christianity have shown the Greco-Roman world to be a place infused with magical conceptions at all levels of society.[40] Rabbinic literature as well abounds in concepts that can be called magical; many of the talmudic sages were known as holders of powerful ritual and angelological secrets. Recent research on Jewish magical texts from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages has amplifed this picture considerably, by showing how Jewish magicians themselves saw the cosmos, their place in it, and their clients' needs.

Because its magic is applied largely to the memorization and acquisition of sacred knowledge, the Sar-Torah literature also bears on the question of the social and behavioral context of knowledge in societies informed by scholasticism. Indeed, it is a premise of this study that we cannot understand the substance of a culture's sacred teachings—Torah, in the case of ancient Judaism—unless we understand how that substance is conveyed through prescribed patterns of behavior, social institutions, and the advancement of an ethos. This premise is implied in the use of the term scholasticism in this study.

In the following, each of these elements—mysticism, magic, and scholasticism—is discussed. Then the study of the Sar-Torah literature is described.

[40] The study of Greco-Roman magic has flourished considerably in recent years; see especially Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells* 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink, eds., *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Marvin W. Meyer and Paul Mirecki, eds., *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

Mysticism

The debate over whether mysticism resides in Hekhalot literature often rests on methodological premises forged by the early and mid-twentieth-century classics of the study of mysticism.[41] At the same time, an equally stimulating discussion has taken place, particularly in the pages of collections edited by Steven Katz, questioning the assumptions by which mysticism has been defined and described.[42] Much current discussion of the nature of mysticism examines critically the premise that expressions of mysticism in world religions consist of interpretations of unmediated experience. A major step in clarifying this question was taken by Scholem in his discussion of the concept of mysticism in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism.* There he observed that "there is no mysticism as such, only the mysticism of a particular religious system."[43] Scholem also stressed that mysticism cannot be confined to the element of inner experience, and is more often than not grounded in the adherent's traditional faith.[44] This point has been taken further by scholars who have sought to demonstrate the role of language and culture not only in conveying mystical experiences, but in creating them as well.[45] More recently, Elliot Wolfson has emphasized the extent to which mysticism can be seen as a hermeneutical process, and so seeks to narrow the gap separating exegesis and experience.[46]

In the case of Hekhalot literature, the question of whether its primary meaning can be found in the individual's experience is particularly acute. The authors of Hekhalot literature speak through the figures of early sages, and do not relate their experiences directly. Rather, they tell stories of how those rabbis traveled to heaven and saw what was there. The Hekhalot texts occasionally speak of emotional and physical effects of the vision on the individual. However, there are few indications that the authors conceived of the ascent exclusively as an *internal* process—that they

[41] Most influential have been Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* (1911; reprint, New York: Doubleday, 1990); Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy,* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950); William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1982).

[42] Steven T. Katz, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); idem, *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[43] Scholem, *Major Trends,* 6.

[44] Ibid., 5–6.

[45] See especially the studies in Katz, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* and *Mysticism and Religious Traditions.*

[46] Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). See especially pp. 108–124 for his discussion of the relevance of Merkavah mysticism for this question.

did not believe that Rabbi Ishmael actually ascended to the Merkavah and encountered the Sar-Torah.[47]

The argument for Merkavah mysticism is thus based on inferences from Hekhalot literature. It holds that the numinous, sometimes bizarre scenes depicted in the literature represent the results of mystical visions cultivated by the authors and transcribed pseudepigraphically as the ascents of Rabbis Ishmael, Akiba, and Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah. Accordingly, the prayers, rituals, and statements regarding the esoteric status of the ritual have been seen as means for achieving that vision. However, recent studies challenge or modify this approach.[48]

From Inner Experience to Ritual

Most scholars of Hekhalot literature since Scholem have considered the texts in terms of the experience of the individuals who wrote them.[49] For example, prayer in Hekhalot literature has been analyzed primarily in terms of its expression of the mystic's apprehension of the numinous and his goal of achieving a mystical state. Yet those prayers were carefully crafted according to well-defined poetic and liturgical patterns, and may have served other functions.[50]

Moreover, the individual's experience itself is inaccessible to us. As Bernard McGinn observes: "Those who define mysticism in terms of a certain type of experience of God often seem to forget that there can be no direct access to experience for the historian. Experience as such is not a part of

[47] This stands in contrast to Hai Gaon's characterization of Merkavah mysticism, discussed in Chapter 6. Hai sees the Merkavah mystic as "looking into himself" and seeing a vision of the heavens. This is consistent with his internalist view of mysticism and magic, by which unexplained phenomena are products of changes in the observer's consciousness, not the external world. On this view, see Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 47–53. Wolfson, *Speculum That Shines,* 108–112, argues that conventional views of the vision in Hekhalot literature operate from inappropriate dichotomies.

[48] See now Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 108–10, on the argument that, as she puts it, "Hekhalot literature should be understood not as rites to be enacted but as stories to be repeated." Cf. also Schäfer, "Aim and Purpose," Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot.* While Halperin argues against seeing Hekhalot literature as a product of ecstatic mysticism, his approach, which stresses the psychological dynamics of the individual authors, still places the emphasis on internal mental processes; cf. below.

[49] See in particular Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic;* Ira Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1982); Joseph Dan, "The Religious Experience of the Merkavah," in Green, *Jewish Spirituality,* 289–307.

[50] See Michael D. Swartz, "Patterns of Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism," in *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism* 6, ed. Paul V. M. Flescher (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1989), 173–86.

the historical record. The only thing directly available to the historian or historical theologian is the evidence, largely in the form of written records, left to us by the Christians of former ages."[51] The dialectical tension between internal experience and external behavior is emblematic of an ongoing concern in the phenomenology of religion, manifest in how scholars of religion treat ritual rules as a subject for study. In the first two chapters of *Natural Symbols,* entitled "Away from Ritual" and ". . . to Inner Experience," Mary Douglas exposes the origins of the tendency not to take the outer manifestations of ritual behavior sufficiently seriously. This tendency has its roots in conflicts going back to the Reformation concerning the proper nature of religion.[52] Douglas warns of the poverty of interpretative depth that can result from overlooking the significance of the details of ritual behavior.[53]

The study of asceticism provides a case in point. Among modern scholars, it has been common until recently to focus on inner motivations for ascetic behavior.[54] Yet we customarily identify asceticism in terms of that behavior. If we do not pay careful attention to that behavior, we therefore neglect the decisive characteristic of asceticism.

This emphasis on inner experience has also dominated the way ritual has been treated in the study of Hekhalot literature. The elaborate rituals of fasting, ablution, and seclusion in these texts have conventionally been considered to be designed for the specific purpose of achieving the state of ecstasy usually associated with the ascent to the Merkavah.[55] There is no denying that fasting, diet, and seclusion are likely to have an effect on the individual's consciousness. But as it is difficult to determine motivations for ascetic behavior without the subject's personal testimony, so too it is difficult to assess the degree to which inner experience is reflected in this anonymous, highly conventional literature.[56] Moreover, few of these rituals have been analyzed in detail.[57] However, if we defer the question of

[51] McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xiv.

[52] Likewise, an important consequence of Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971) is to make us aware of the degree to which modern notions of the relationship of magic to religion stem from Reformation debates. Cf. now more generally Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[53] Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

[54] For a critique of this tendency to see ascetic behavior in terms of its motives, see Steven D. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in Arthur Green, ed. *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroads, 1987), pp. 254–55.

[55] See the opening discussion in Chapter 6.

[56] On this point, see Schäfer, "Aim and Purpose"; for the situation with regard to prayer see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer.*

[57] Rituals in Hekhalot literature are surveyed in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 99–110, and idem, "Manichaeism and Judaism in Light of the *Cologne Mani Codex,*" 253–77, first published in

the inner experience that may lie behind these practices, we can in fact learn a great deal from them. Because these rituals draw from the rich heritage of myth, law, and cosmology of Judaism in late antiquity, we can use those influences to trace their underlying assumptions and purposes.

In this study, rituals in the Hekhalot corpus will be examined using textual and philological tools with an eye to understanding their operating principles and mythic worldview. Because these rituals play a central role in the common understanding of Merkavah mysticism as visionary experience, these findings can illuminate the question of the mystical character of Hekhalot literature.

Magic

The rituals and narrative patterns that play a central role in this study are analyzed below in the light of the literature of Jewish magic of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.[58] Scholars have acknowledged from the beginning that a close relationship exists between Hekhalot literature and Jewish and Greco-Roman magic. In *Jewish Gnosticism* Scholem elaborated several important points of contact between Hekhalot texts and Greek magical papyri, Aramaic incantation texts, and other sources of ancient

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Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 50 (1983), 29–45. Cf. also Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), where several details in the literature are considered in light of later Jewish mystical practices.

[58] The best general account of Jewish magic is still Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York: Behrman, 1939; reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1982) The classic account of magic in the talmudic period is Ludwig Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (Budapest: Jahrsbericht der Landes-Rabbinerschule, 1897–98, and Berlin: Louis Lamm, 1914). For surveys of research on Jewish magic and publications of magical texts see P. S. Alexander, "Incantations and Books of Magic," in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman (Edinburgh: Clark, 1986), 3.1:342–79; Peter Schäfer, "Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *JJS* 41 (1990): 75–91; and Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 15–22. For an example of a Jewish magical manual from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages see Mordecai Margaliot, *Sefer Ha-Razim: Hu' Sefer Keshafim mi-Tequfat ha-Talmud* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966); for a translation of Margaliot's edition of *Sefer ha-Razim* see Michael Morgan, trans., *Sepher ha-Razim: The Book of Mysteries* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983). Important magical texts from late antiquity and the Middle Ages are published in Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity,* 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987); idem, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993); and Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza* 1 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994).

magic.[59] Recently there has been increased recognition of the importance of this factor for our understanding of Hekhalot literature.[60]

To recognize the extent to which magic was an ingredient of Judaism in the rabbinic milieu is to rethink the nature of ancient Judaism itself. It was common until recently to see in rabbinic Judaism a rejection of magical ideas; that is, the rabbis would not assent to the coercive use of ritual or the name of God.[61] Yet although the Talmuds do discuss forbidden magical practices,[62] historians of Judaism have observed that the rabbinic leadership in late antiquity cultivated practices that could conventionally be considered magical.[63]

But this rediscovery of the magical dimension of ancient Judaism, like any discussion of the place of magic in a religious phenomenon, poses several problems. Contemporary students of religion have questioned the applicability of the term magic, and a satisfactory definition has not been formulated.[64] Much of the controversy surrounding the term magic has focused on how the notion of magic is applied to traditional, non-Western societies. Bound up with this issue is the question of whether there is something intrinsic called "magic" that can be separated from "religion,"

[59] Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 65–83.

[60] Peter Schäfer considers magic to be an essential component of the literature. See his "Aim and Purpose" and *Hidden and Manifest God;* see n. 113 below.

[61] See, for example, Urbach, *Sages,* 97–134; and Blau, *Zauberwesen.*

[62] The principal discussion of forbidden practices is chapter 10 of the tractate Sanhedrin.

[63] Important work on magical elements in the rabbinic milieu has been done by Saul Lieberman, Daniel Sperber, and Jacob Neusner, among others. See especially Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962); and the studies collected in Daniel Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1994). For magical practices among the Babylonian rabbis see Jacob Neusner, *Babylonia,* vols. 4 and 5, several chapters of which are collected in Jacob Neusner, *The Wonder Working Lawyers of Babylonia* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1987). The *Ḥaside 'Ashkenaz* collected and annotated many earlier magical texts such as the *Havdalah de-Rabbi Akiba* and *Sefer ha-Razim;* however, this does not necessarily mean that these texts themselves derived from circles of the ancient Jewish elite.

[64] See especially Hans H. Penner, "Rationality, Ritual and Science," in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Paul V. M. Flesher, *Religion, Science and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict* (New York: Oxford, 1989), 11–24. See also Hilderd Geertz, "An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6 (1975): 71–89 (cf. Thomas's response, pp. 91–109); Murray and Rosalie Wax, "The Notion of Magic," *Current Anthropology* 4 (1963): 495–518; and Dorothy Hammond, "Magic: A Problem in Semantics," *American Anthropologist* 72 (1970): 1349–56. On the application of the term to the Greek Magical Papyri see John G. Gager, "A New Translation of Ancient Greek and Demotic Papyri, Sometimes Called Magical," *Journal of Religion* 67 (1987): 80–86; cf. Alan F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 80–108.

and whether this dichotomy presupposes an evolutionary view that sees those societies that employ "magic" as inferior.[65] Yet our use of this term need not imply this dichotomy. Indeed, to separate or rank magic in opposition to religion not only misstates their relationship, but limits the sphere of religion, which can encompass the use of ritual power for the individual's needs.[66]

In this study the term magic will be used within a particular heuristic frame of reference, as the applicability of the notion of magic to each cultural context must be decided on a case-by-case basis.[67] In the case of Judaism, it is possible to use the term to describe identifiable textual corpora having distinct literary traits. In paying close attention to literary features in establishing criteria for classification, we have the opportunity to listen to the voices of the magicians themselves—concentrating on their distinctive rhetoric and logic. Based on recent studies of Jewish magical texts in Late Antiquity and the earlier Middle Ages,[68] we can identify three prevailing elements of Jewish magical texts: (1) the emphasis on the power of the name of God; (2) the intermediacy of the angels in negotiating between divine providence and human needs; and (3) the application of divine names and ritual practices for the needs of specific individuals.[69]

This characterization has the advantage of describing a type of activity that can exist *within* the framework of religious behavior.[70] Each of its components can be found in other areas of ancient Judaism. Yet these elements come together in a fairly coherent way in what are conventionally called magical texts—especially amulets, handbooks containing incantation texts, and ritual prescriptions. We therefore have a way of designating them that, like all heuristic terms, allows us to proceed in an economical manner.

[65] On this issue see the debate between Geertz and Thomas cited in note 64. Cf. William J. Goode, "Magic and Religion: A Continuum," *Ethnos* 13 (1948): 172–82; and Robin Horton, "Neo-Tylorianism: Sound Sense or Sinister Prejudice?" *Man,* n.s. 3 (1968): 624–34. For Greco-Roman civilization, the conventional distinction is defended by A. A. Barb, "The Survival of Magic Arts," in Arnoldo Momigliano, ed., *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 100–125. For a thoughtful consideration of the issue see H. S. Versnel, "Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion," *Numen* 38 (1991): 177–97.

[66] On this point see especially Versnel, "Reflections."

[67] Cf. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic," 81, where, in the course of arguing against a universal definition of the term magic, he observes that "its meaning changes as the context in which it is used changes."

[68] See the studies cited in note 58.

[69] See Michael D. Swartz, "Scribal Magic and Its Rhetoric: Formal Patterns in Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah," *HTR* 83 (1990): 179; Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 12–15.

[70] Cf. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1516: "Magic is not religion only in the sense that the species is not the genus."

The study of the magical dimension of ancient Judaism is directly relevant to its social history. Magic has been described both as an essentially antisocial activity and as something that reinforces the values of society. On the one hand, the magician can be seen as functioning primarily as an individual, who has, in Emile Durkheim's formulation, "a clientele and not a church."[71] Recently, scholars of ancient Greco-Roman magic have emphasized its subversive nature. For example, Ramsay MacMullen listed magicians, along with philosophers, astrologers, and soothsayers, among the "enemies of the Roman order."[72] Moreover, those theories of social analysis that see the term magic primarily as an expression of accusation against objects of a community's social disapproval can also be related to the notion that magic is a subversive phenomenon.[73] In these more purely social definitions of magic, it is identified not with the characteristics of a particular set of practices, but with its antinormative status.[74] According to this approach, it is not merely that magic is by definition subversive, but that subversive religious practices are by definition magic.[75]

On the other hand, there are those who stress the role of tradition in the

[71] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 60. As Durkheim puts it, W. Robertson Smith saw magic as "opposed to religion as society is to the individual." See Durkheim, *Elementary Forms,* 61 n. 62, summarizing W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites,* 3rd ed. (1927; reprint, New York: Ktav, 1969), 264–65 (Durkheim cites the second edition). As Durkheim's note implies, we need not posit a dichotomy between magic and religion to see magic as subversive both of a religious society's social order and its traditional values.

[72] Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 95–127. See now John Gager, "Moses the Magician: Hero of an Ancient Jewish Counter-Culture?" *Helios* 21 (1994): 179–88; cf. David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity" *ANRW* 2.23.2 (1980): 1507–57; cf. p. 1519 on the opinion that Greco-Roman magic, because of its international character, acted as a kind of "intellectual fifth column."

[73] It can be said that E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937), led the way to this approach by focusing not on the practice of witchcraft but on how accusations of witchcraft functioned in the society. The implications of this approach are drawn out in Mary Douglas, ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock, 1970); for its application to the Greco-Roman environment see, in that volume, Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages," 17–45.

[74] For an early formulation of such a social definition see Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic,* trans. Robert Brain (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 24. For the application of this idea to Greco-Roman religions see in particular Jonathan Z. Smith, "Good News Is No News: Aretalogy and Gospel," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty,* ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 21–38; cf. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," who identifies magic with deviant religious practices. For a summary and discussion of this argument see Versnel, "Reflections."

[75] This theory thus cannot by definition center on a body of evidence for practices alleged to be magical themselves. Nor, as Versnel observes ("Reflections," 183), does such analysis "preclude the existence of more concrete 'substantive' implications of the term."

validation of magical practices.[76] This argument modulates the characterization of magic as individualistic or antisocial. The appeal to tradition would indicate a magician conscious of social norms and shared myths. In light of this debate, the magical dimension of Hekhalot literature can be critical evidence of its social origins and function. It will be seen that Jewish magical literature has much to tell us about the literary form, operating principles, and social setting of the Hekhalot texts.

Scholasticism

In this study the Sar-Torah phenomenon is described as scholastic magic because of its appropriation of rabbinic scholasticism through magical means. The term scholasticism commonly refers to the curriculum, philosophy, and ethos of medieval European Christian academies. However, the term has occasionally been applied to Greco-Roman philosophy, talmudic Judaism, and trends in Eastern religions. Scholasticism is a category that is only now gaining recognition in the comparative study of religion.

In our quest to understand premodern religious phenomena in their variety, historians of religion often focus on those activities, such as magic, that seem most alien to modern sensibilities, while paying less attention to the phenomenological aspects of types of scholastic behavior that seem closest to our own, intellectualist approach. Yet scholasticism and magic have something in common. The term scholasticism, like magic, has often been used pejoratively. It is sometimes used to refer to the activity of intellectual bureaucrats engaged in irrelevant logic-chopping and endless commentary.[77] Both categories have served as important arguments in the Reformation—both against Catholicism and Judaism—and have therefore been important in forming our modern understanding of religion.[78] Moreover, scholasticism also shares with magic a past reputation as a kind

[76] See, for example, Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1954), 74–75, on which see Chapter 7 below. Cf. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 20–31 and elsewhere, who relates magic closely to priestcraft and thus to old aristocratic elements in religious society.

[77] See, most recently, George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 39–47, who sees in the scholastic heritage of the contemporary university many of its current failings. Indeed, even some of the more dispassionate writers on scholasticism have attributed these characteristics to later scholasticism. See for example Joseph Pieper, *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 24–25; cf. also Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. T. L. Fagan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), and compare his recent reconsideration of his earlier position on pp. xxi–xxii.

[78] Recently Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed out how important images of Catholicism have been in forging modern concepts of religion; see his *Drudgery Divine*. See also J. Samuel Preuss, *Explaining Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

of inferior rationality, in that magic was once conceived as primitive science.[79] Both were seen to emphasize external behavior and the instrumental power of words.[80]

However, contemporary scholars are now beginning to examine the value of this category for the study of religion. In a forthcoming study of language in Tibetan Buddhism, José Cabezón argues for the "decontextualization" of the category of scholasticism and its use in religious studies.[81] According to Cabezón, scholasticism can describe social and intellectual movements in several complex religious cultures and is often characterized by several features. Among these are a belief in the basic intelligibility of the universe; an orientation to tradition; an investment in the value of intellectual argument for the self-conception of the group; and an interest in synthesizing large quantities of textual material into a coherent whole. Although scholasticism is usually associated with philosophical systems, Cabezón acknowledges that the scholastic interest in reconciling the intellectual and experiential dimensions of religious life can be applied to the study of ritual and law, as in Mimamsa Hinduism, Judaism, and Confucianism.

This characterization of scholasticism is helpful for placing rabbinic Judaism into conceptual context.[82] By this account, scholasticism, like rabbinic Judaism, does not rely on reason independent of authority but insists on dialectical practices that are passed down through a succession of teachers. Furthermore, a major feature of talmudic argument involves the comparison and reconciliation of disparate textual sources.

In fact, earlier cross-cultural uses of the term scholasticism have occasionally referred to Judaism. In an early essay arguing for a comparative concept of scholasticism, P. Masson-Oursel included medieval Jewish philosophy among his examples.[83] More recently, Anthony Saldarini implies

[79] Cf., for example, I. C. Jarvie and Joseph Agassi, "The Problem of the Rationality of Magic," in *Rationality,* ed. Bryan Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 172–93, and G. E. R. Lloyd, *Demystifying Mentalities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), especially pp. 39–72. Cf. the discussions of magic cited in n. 65 above.

[80] In fact, this particular connection may go back to ancient Greece. Jacqueline de Romilly has shown that Greek intellectuals linked magic and rhetoric for similar reasons. See her *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[81] José Ignacio Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). My thanks to Professor Cabezón for making portions of his study available to me in advance of publication.

[82] The implications of rabbinic Judaism for the study of scholasticism are considered further in Michael D. Swartz, "Scholasticism as a Comparative Category and the Study of Judaism," in *Comparative Scholasticism and the Study of Religion,* ed. José I. Cabezón (forthcoming).

[83] P. Masson-Oursel, "La Scholastique," *Revue Philosophique* 45 (1920): 123–41. In particular, the philosophical system of Moses Maimonides has been labeled scholastic, primarily because of its Aristotelianism and influence on Thomas Aquinas's thought. Joseph Pieper,

the comparative possibilities of this term in giving the title *Scholastic Rabbinism* to his study of the rabbinic manifesto *'Avot de-Rabbi Natan*. Saldarini's book, like earlier related studies by Henry Fischel, places the rabbinic ideals of study and tradition in their Greco-Roman context.[84]

According to Raimundo Pannikkar, a primary feature of scholasticism is the principle of authority.[85] As a consequence, scholastics believe in the intrinsic value of tradition: "Truth or any other value is not reached by means of private and individualized tools, but by receiving from and handing over . . . the cultural deposit."[86] The authority of past revelation is presupposed by scholastics' reliance on a canon as the source of scholastic discussion. The contribution of the individual is made in scholasticism through commentary and dialectic.[87] In the rabbinic theory of revelation, human agency and wisdom play an essential role. Unlike their apocalyptic predecessors, the rabbis included themselves, their opinions, and their reasoning in the category of Torah. This is exemplified by the opening to the tractate Avot (known as *Sayings of the Fathers*), composed shortly after the Mishnah in the third century C.E. and included in the mishnaic canon. As discussed in detail in Chapter 7, this passage depicts the transmission of Torah through a "chain of tradition," in the course of which each generation adds its teachings to that of its forebears. This motif and its cultural background figure prominently in the present study, in which notions of tradition in magical and rabbinic literatures are compared.[88]

At the same time, a hallmark of scholasticism is seen to be the scholar's faith in rationality as a means of understanding the world. Although whether talmudic thought embodies a different rationality from the Western variety, it is acknowledged that patterns of reasoning are essential to talmudic dialectic.[89] Talmudic thought shares with other types of scholastic activity the interplay of pure reason, faith, and authority.

Scholasticism, 105, notes that Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* has been called "a Jewish-Scholastic *Summa*."

[84] See Henry A. Fischel, "The Uses of Sorites (*Climax, Gradatio*) in the Tannaitic Period," *HUCA* 44 (1973): 119–51, discussed at length in Chapter 7. Steiner, *Real Presences*, 40–42, also includes talmudic dialectic and commentary in his description of the scholasticism that he opposes.

[85] Raimundo Panikkar, "Common Patterns of Eastern and Western Scholasticism," *Diogenes* 83 (1973). My thanks to Professor David Carpenter for this reference.

[86] Ibid., 105.

[87] Ibid., 104–9.

[88] See Chapter 7.

[89] For a suggestive discussion of the implications of the literary forms of talmudic dialectic, see David Kraemer, *The Mind of the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). On the question of the rationality of rabbinic reasoning in the context of the larger debate on the rationality of nonwestern and premodern societies, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, "Myth, Inference, and the Relativism of Reason: An Argument from the History of Judaism," in *Myth and Philosophy*, ed. Frank Reynolds and David Tracy (Albany: State University

The use of scholasticism as a comparative category also implies an interest in the living context of learning. The history of rabbinic Judaism is concerned not only with the theological and legal concepts developed with the rabbis, but how they sought to transmit them. Indeed, because of the primacy of the idea of Torah as embodied in the sage and his teaching, rabbinic theology cannot be separated from the behavioral context in which it is carried out. Consideration of the Sar-Torah material alerts us to this point. The Sar-Torah texts claim to enable their readers to achieve the skills and status of wise and powerful rabbis. In order to understand what this meant to them, we must know what activities were promoted in rabbinic societies, what values were held by their elite, and how knowledge and power were conceived by that elite and other classes. It will be seen that the Sar-Torah phenomenon illuminates rabbinic scholasticism by contrast and provides a rare example of how groups outside the academy saw the rabbinic estate. It is a reminder that scholastic communities affect not only their own class and history, but those of others.

The Sar-Torah Literature

In light of these issues, this study will focus on two important aspects of Hekhalot literature that can serve as indicators of its authors' relationship to society: ritual and tradition. Ritual has played an important role in how Merkavah mysticism has been perceived. It also signifies the authors' relationship to halakhah, magic, and other important cultural systems of the times. So too, by examining the literature's use of ideal figures and its concepts of tradition and authority, we can tell much about how the authors saw themselves and their place in society—or at least how they wished society would view them. Both of these elements are prominent in the Sar-Torah texts and can help us understand the historical background of one stream within the Hekhalot tradition.

The Sar-Torah tradition is made up of a complex network of stories and ritual prescriptions. The main texts of this tradition are narratives in which a rabbi, usually Rabbi Ishmael, is instructed in the Sar-Torah procedure. The narrative then testifies to the success in learning the rabbi attained when he used that magical procedure. One narrative, found in *Hekhalot Rabbati,* is cast as a kind of apocalypse, in which the elders of Israel receive

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of New York Press, 1990), 247–85; cf. Naomi Janowitz and Andrew J. Lazarus, "Rabbinic Methods of Inference and the Rationality Debate," *Journal of Religion* 72 (1992): 491–511. On the more specific question of whether talmudic logic was influenced by Aristotelian logic, see, for example, Louis Jacobs, *Studies in Talmudic Logic and Methodology* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961); David Daube, "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation," *HUCA* 22 (1949): 239–65; and idem, "Alexandrian Methods of Interpretation and the Rabbis," in *Festschrift Hans Lewald* (Basel: Helbing and Lichtenhahn, 1953), 27–44.

the secret of the magical procedure. Other Sar-Torah and related texts are brief testimonies and ritual instructions.

As we have seen, the Sar-Torah literature is of particular interest for its emphasis on the study of Torah as an object of magical activity. As Torah constitutes revelation for classical Judaism, and is mediated, according to rabbinic thought, in an unbroken chain from God through Moses to the rabbis of the latest generation, a phenomenon whose avowed purpose was to increase one's proficiency in learning Torah has both conceptual and social ramifications. Torah was both a central value and an indicator of status in rabbinic society. The study of Torah was both a ritual act and the sign of a great man. The authors of the Sar-Torah corpus sought to achieve this greatness through magical means. As we will see, they were influenced by rabbinic legends and speculation about the original revelation of Torah. However, they were also influenced by magical, mystical, and apocalyptic literatures, and we must look to those genres as well to understand their needs and priorities. By doing so we can also delineate the relationship of these authors to the sources of holiness and authority of their society.

As a corollary of the principle that the Sar-Torah phenomenon is to be studied on its own terms, attention will be paid to the practical considerations behind the central purposes of the texts and their consequences. Because the Sar-Torah texts claim to give the individual great skill in studying Torah, we will consider what that may have meant to the practitioners. In rabbinic theology, Torah constitutes both the substance of revelation and its content. To apply terms articulated for the study of ancient Judaism by Michael Fishbane, the idea of Torah embraces both *traditio*—the way in which a sacred culture is transmitted—and *traditium*—the message of that culture.[90] Accordingly, in considering the meaning of Torah for the Sar-Torah literature, we will examine what, in the most palpable of terms, the activity of learning Torah entailed. Particularly illuminating for this purpose is research undertaken recently on the role of memory in premodern scholastic cultures, and in rabbinic Judaism in particular.[91] In addition, we will explore the specific significance that Torah and revelation take on when set into the esoteric and magical context of the Sar-Torah texts in the Hekhalot literature.[92]

[90] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 6–19. Fishbane followed D. Knight, *Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975) in using these terms; see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation,* 6 n. 17.

[91] See Chapter 2.

[92] See Chapter 8. The seminal discussions on the cosmic and esoteric dimensions of Torah for Jewish mysticism and magic are Gershom Scholem, "The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism," in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 32–86; and Moshe Idel, "*Tefisat ha-Torah be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ve-Gilguleha ba-Qabbalah,*" *Meḥqere Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 1 (1981–82): 23–84.

Method

The key to understanding Merkavah mysticism lies in the close reading of the Hekhalot literature itself. Only by understanding its formal properties, rhetoric, poetic cadences, and special vocabulary can we uncover the concerns and worldviews of its authors. This task is made at once easier and more complicated thanks to the efforts of Peter Schäfer in the last decade and a half.

With the publication of Schäfer's *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur,* a new stage in the study of this literature was reached.[93] Schäfer found that the manuscript evidence for Hekhalot literature did not warrant the creation of a standard "critical edition" in which a manuscript approximating the "best" text is presented with variants listed at the bottom. Rather, the nature of the literature required a synoptic arrangement, in which manuscripts are placed side by side in columns, and no single manuscript is given priority.[94] In synoptic presentation, it can be seen that variations between manuscripts of Hekhalot literature often consist of whole paragraphs or sections present in one manuscript and absent, or in an entirely different order, in another. This problem was brought further into relief with the publication of Schäfer's *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur.* Most of the Genizah fragments published there arrange Hekhalot material in entirely unanticipated ways.[95]

This textual situation, Schäfer has argued, attests to a literature that took the form not of cohesive "books," each originating in a single Urtext, but a literature characterized by dynamic, shifting relationships among larger and smaller units.[96] Schäfer's edition was thus not a provisional one in anticipation of the final reconstruction of the original *Hekhalot Rabbati, Hekhalot Zutarti,* and so on; nor was he expressing pessimism about the possibility of creating such a reconstruction.[97] Rather, these findings lead us to see Hekhalot literature, and perhaps many other such texts of rabbinic Judaism, in a new way.

[93] Schäfer, *Synopse.*

[94] While this is rightly the principle behind Schäfer's edition, it should be understood that some manuscripts are clearly inferior copies of better extant manuscripts or their *Vorläge.* See Michael D. Swartz, review of Martin S. Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions,* JAOS 110 (1990): 582–84.

[95] On the implications of the Genizah texts for the composition of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* see Peter Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature," in *Hekhalot-Studien,* 11–12.

[96] Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction." This textual state is often called "fluid." This term is somewhat misleading as it does not take into account the cohesive smaller units—building blocks or modules, so to speak—that make up the varying forms of a text.

[97] Cf. Ithamar Gruenwald, "Literary and Redactional Issues in the Study of the Hekhalot Literature," in *From Apocalyptism to Gnosticism,* 175–89.

If, as has been argued, the textual problems in Hekhalot literature are relevant to the study of rabbinic texts in general,[98] Schäfer's thesis raises issues that go beyond the edition and analysis of individual texts or corpora to hermeneutical questions: When and how do we define a text? How can we resolve such matters as authorial intent or redactional program in a corpus that does not easily lend itself to analysis of whole texts that begin and end?[99] A possible effect on the reader of encountering this literature, which has no definite boundaries, no center, and in which the identity of individual works is open to question, is described vividly by Halperin: "Open Schäfer's *Synopse* at any point . . . and you find yourself plunged into a swirl of hymns, incantations, divine names, and fantastic descriptions of heavenly beings. All of this usually seems to be assembled in no discernible pattern and to no discernible purpose."[100]

How, then, can we study such a literature? Historically, of course, the Hekhalot corpus did not originate as a swirl of hymns, incantations, and so on. It is the product of many successive generations of scribal activity, oral performance, and redactional control exercised in varying degrees at each stage of the texts' composition. This process spanned from amoraic Palestine to medieval Germany.[101]

When the tools of form- and source-criticism are applied, the literature emerges neither as a collection of discrete and coherent works, nor an amorphous mass of undifferentiated text, but a complex network of interrelated units. These units do in fact fall into patterns and coalesce into a type of textual complex that Schäfer terms the macroform.[102] In many cases, a coherent history of the textual tradition can be written.[103] How-

[98] Peter Schäfer, "Research into Rabbinic Literature: An Attempt to Define the Status Quaestionis," *JJS* 37 (1986): 139–52; Michael D. Swartz, review of Daniel Sperber, *A Commentary on Derekh Erez Zuta, Hebrew Studies* 33 (1992): 163–65. It may be that this textual state is particularly characteristic of a later period in the evolution of rabbinic literature, which took place in later Amoraic and early Geonic times. Cf. Marc Bregman, "The Tanhuma/Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions," Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991.

[99] On problems faced in dealing with composite composition of works in antiquity, cf. Jeffrey H. Tigay, ed., *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

[100] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 367.

[101] On this point see Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien*, 1–7; Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 216–20, and Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 51–76; on the redactional activity of the *Haside Ashkenaz*, who produced the major manuscripts, see Y. M. Ta-Shema, "*Sifriatam shel Ḥasidut Ashkenaz bene ha-Me'ah ha-y"-ha-y"b*," *Qiriat Sefer* 60 (1985): 298–309.

[102] Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction"; idem, *Hidden and Manifest God*, 6–8. In this study, the term "text" will refer to several types of textual units, including what Schäfer terms the macroform.

[103] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, is, in part, an exercise in analyzing the history of a single textual tradition; on method in the study of Hekhalot texts, see pp. 32–36. Cf. also Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*.

ever, each macroform is itself composed of recensions, which vary in wording and organization of material. Because of this, the component units take priority in analysis.[104] A primary task of the critic is to understand the process of composition, the meaning and character of the constituent units, and the textual and conceptual considerations that led a redactor to arrange them in a given way. This is possible through what might be called a modular approach, which stresses the role of more stable units and their combination in larger collections in analysis.

In the case of a study of a phenomenon such as the Sar-Torah literature, that spans several textual traditions, this procedure is of particular value. Through this method it will be seen that the Sar-Torah tradition is one of several building blocks that make up the Hekhalot corpus. Its distinctive nature and purposes can then emerge. Using form and redaction criticism it will be possible to see how the Sar-Torah texts are related to the Hekhalot material into which they are set, how the various examples of the Sar-Torah phenomenon are related, and how individual units came to be. Moreover, because of its emphasis on the formal and rhetorical properties of these texts and their implications, form criticism will play a pivotal role in determining the concerns, priorities, and influences of the authors.

This discussion of the literary nature of the Hekhalot corpus, which underscores its composite nature, brings us back to the question of the role of individual experience in the study of mystical texts. It suggests that this literature represents not the mystical visions of individuals who transcribed them pseudepigraphically as the ascent of Rabbi Ishmael or Rabbi Akiba, but a literary tradition that took shape over several centuries and communities and for several purposes. If this is so, we must proceed with caution when asking what experience lay behind these curious texts. We must also place new emphasis on the contextual and social aspects of Hekhalot literature. As shown above, the Sar-Torah texts lend themselves particularly well to such an approach. Their application of the conventions of ritual and magical procedure to the scholastic values of Torah and wisdom illustrate the conjunction between the literary, pragmatic, and social factors that operate in this literature.

By this method it will be shown that the Sar-Torah and ascent traditions in Hekhalot literature are distinct redactional and historical phenomena. At the same time, we will observe phenomenological and historical affinities between the Sar-Torah and ascent literatures that make the Sar-Torah texts relevant to the central issues in the study of Merkavah mysticism. These affinities may have led the redactors of the Hekhalot literature to include them in the Hekhalot corpus.[105] Moreover, both sectors of the

[104] See Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction," 15–16.

[105] For ritual assumptions that inform both, see chapter 7. There is also a visionary component to some of the stories of the *Sar-Torah;* for a discussion of this dimension of the texts see Wolfson, *Speculum That Shines,* 115–16.

literature can serve as evidence for esoteric trends outside of the central rabbinic circles, and thus contribute to our knowledge of the social history of the rabbinic milieu.[106]

Sources for Study

The principal texts under study here are published in Schäfer's *Synopse, Geniza-Fragmente,* and other editions of Hekhalot literature. While the focus of this study is on the Sar-Torah corpus, related texts, such as those concerning conjuration of the Angel of the Presence, will also be analyzed in detail.

Because the authors of Sar-Torah undoubtedly lived under the deep influence of rabbinic Judaism, the rabbinic canon is an important source for determining linguistic, legal, and exegetical details, as well as for understanding the Sar-Torah practitioners' relationship to their social environment. The Hekhalot texts stand outside of what might be strictly termed the rabbinic canon, having been transmitted only in small circles through the Middle Ages.[107] But this literature, along with other texts of what can be called rabbinic apocrypha,[108] has expanded the boundaries of the texts we use to understand rabbinic Judaism. This category includes extracanonical halakhic and quasi-legal tractates of Geonic provenance[109] and so-called minor midrashim. Many of the latter are published in anthologies such as Jellinek's *Bet ha-Midrash* and Wertheimer's *Bate Midrashot*[110]—which made the Hekhalot literature available to scholars in the first place—and medieval collections embracing folklore and fragments of lost rabbinic texts.

These literatures deserve renewed attention from scholars.[111] Many of them manifest subtle differences from the rabbinic canon in legal or narrative details, religious concerns, and social setting. They thus attest to the diversity within rabbinic Judaism of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

[106] For the case of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 216–23.

[107] The term canon is applied to rabbinic literature here with admitted imprecision; it refers principally to the Mishnah, Tosefta, Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, the better-known early midrashim, and so on. On rabbinic ideas of canon see David Kraemer, "The Formation of Rabbinic Canon: Authority and Boundaries," *JBL* 110 (1991): 613–30.

[108] For the term rabbinic apocrypha see Swartz, review of Sperber.

[109] See M. B. Lerner, "The External Tractates," in *The Literature of the Sages,* Part 1, ed. Shmuel Safrai (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 367–409.

[110] See n. 16.

[111] The work of Martha Himmelfarb in particular has helped to bring many of these texts to the attention of contemporary scholars. See her *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); for medieval Hebrew texts see Joseph Dan, *Ha-Sippur ha-'Ivri be-Yeme ha-Benayim: 'Iyyunim be-Toldotav* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974).

We will also be aided by cosmological and related esoteric texts and magical amulets and handbooks found in the Cairo Genizah and other collections.[112] Although the prevalence of magic in Hekhalot literature has been recognized,[113] Jewish magical literature has not been employed systematically for understanding the phenomenology and dynamics of rituals in the Hekhalot texts.[114] It will be seen that affinities between the two corpora go beyond specific details of magical names and techniques to substantial matters of their worldviews and notions of ritual efficacy.

Procedure

We have seen that we can advance our understanding of the complexity of Jewish society in the rabbinic period by determining the historical and social context of Hekhalot literature. By studying the ritual texts and attitudes toward tradition and authority in the literature, we can locate its authors more precisely in comparison to those of the canonical rabbinic texts. At the same time we can illuminate one of the larger issues raised by Hekhalot literature, that of the relationship of mysticism to society and its norms. These two elements, ritual and concepts of tradition, are most prominent in the Sar-Torah literature. This literature itself is an important source for understanding the diversity of forms that the concept and practice of Torah took in rabbinic Judaism and its environs.

As the goal of the Sar-Torah practitioner is the acquisition of Torah, we must understand the practices and cultural processes by which ancient and medieval Jews customarily made such acquisition possible. This is done in Chapter 2, in which the place of memory in antiquity in general and rabbinic culture in particular, and ways of cultivating it, are described. We then turn to the texts themselves. In order to understand the Sar-Torah phenomenon it is necessary to analyze the texts in detail (Chapters 3–5), translating and annotating them and paying attention to the peculiar text-critical and literary problems Hekhalot literature presents. Once we have seen the Sar-Torah literature as a whole, we focus on two elements in the literature that make it of particular interest: preparatory rituals and ideas of tradition and authority. When these are examined, it will be seen that the

[112] See n. 58.

[113] See Schäfer, "Aim and Purpose;" Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 75–100; and Morton Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati," in *Biblical and Other Studies,* ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 142–60.

[114] *Sefer ha-Razim* and its literary and thematic affinities to Hekhalot literature are discussed in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 224–34; cf. also Schäfer, "Aim and Purpose." While Naomi Janowitz, *Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), discusses theories of magic and magical language in her study of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* she does not deal with Jewish magical literature specifically. However, there has been increasing attention to magical texts and their implications for Hekhalot literature.

Sar-Torah phenomenon is deeply informed by cultural patterns that can be traced to mythic assumptions and ideologies found in ancient Judaism and other mediterranean religions, but which illuminate the types of Judaism reflected in the canonical rabbinic literature in significant ways. It is argued in Chapter 6 that the Sar-Torah rituals are best understood not as efforts to achieve a mystical vision, or as evidence for the normative status of mystical halakhah, but as an effort to maintain an supererogatory level of ritual purity for magical purposes. It is shown in Chapter 7 that the authors of this literature and related texts display a highly ambivalent attitude to tradition and authority, one consistent neither with the architects of the normative ideology of religion nor of a lower class protesting that ideology. In the concluding chapter, the implications of these findings for the history of Judaism and the history of religions are assessed.

Chapter 2

MEMORY, TORAH, AND MAGIC

As THE Sar-Torah texts concern the acquisition of skill in learning Torah by means of the adjuration of an angel, they bring together the themes of memory and magic. Before we proceed to an analysis of the Sar-Torah texts themselves, it is helpful to examine the relationship between these two aspects of ancient Judaism. In this chapter the place and function of memory in rabbinic Judaism are described briefly in the light of current research on the place of memory in premodern societies. Then the use of magical techniques for improvement of memory is surveyed. Having established these elements of the Sar-Torah tradition's conceptual framework, it will be possible to look at those texts in detail.

The Importance of Memory

One of the Sar-Torah's most precious gifts to the practitioner is a spectacular memory. In one Sar-Torah text, the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah Version A, Rabbi Ishmael relates his distress because of his trouble in learning: "A scriptural passage that I was reading one day[1] I would forget the next, and a mishnaic passage that I was repeating one day I would forget the next" (§278). When he performs the Sar-Torah ritual correctly, "immediately my heart was enlightened like the gates of the east, and my eyes gazed into the depths and paths of Torah, and never again did I forget anything my ears heard from my teacher, of study; nor would I ever again forget anything of the paths of Torah in which I engaged for their truth" (§279). Rabbi Ishmael's "enlightenment" consists not only of spiritual or intellectual insight, or encompassing wisdom;[2] rather, he has been blessed by the angel with an exceptional memory. Thanks to the magic of the Sar-Torah, Rabbi Ishmael will now be able to remember not only the Bible and Mishnah of his curriculum, but every statement and analytical discussion he hears. In order to understand the importance of this aspect of the

[1] MS. M22: *le-yamim,* "after [a few] days."

[2] It must be remembered that the heart was the seat of intellect for ancient Jews. See Fred Rosner, trans. and ed., *Julius Preuss's Biblical and Talmudic Medicine* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1983), 104–5; Preuss notes rabbinic expressions (for example, b. Menaḥ. 80b and Yeb. 9a: "He doesn't have a brain in his skull") that also ascribe intellectual function to the brain. That idea, however, is not found in our corpus.

Sar-Torah tradition and its implications, it will be helpful to look at the place and nature of memorization in rabbinic civilization.

The practice of memory in premodern civilizations has only recently been given concentrated attention, although its role in oral societies has been acknowledged since the inception of folklore studies. Since Frances Yates's pioneering study, *The Art of Memory,*[3] recent work on the subject has shed light on an important current in classical and medieval Western cultures: the scholastic traditions and esoteric techniques for cultivation of memory. With the appearance of Mary Carruthers's *Book of Memory,* the role of memory not only as an activity but as a value and psychological concept has been brought to prominence in historical studies. Studies have also appeared assessing the implications of memory techniques in non-Western cultures and contemporary traditional societies.[4] The following summary of traditions on memory in Judaism in late antiquity is informed by this recent trend in research.[5] Its purpose is to demonstrate the importance of memory for rabbinic civilization and to explore the options available to those who, like the Sar-Torah practitioners, wanted to increase this vital capacity.

In Rabbinic Judaism

The study of memory in rabbinic Judaism is still in its beginnings. While there has been a good deal of debate in recent decades about orality in rabbinic literature,[6] the systematic study of its relationship to memoriza-

[3] Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). See also Helga Hadju, *Das Mnemotechnische Schriften des Mittelalters* (Vienna: Franz Leo, 1936).

[4] Frits Staal, *The Fidelity of Oral Tradition and the Origins of Science* (Amsterdam/Oxford/New York: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1986); cf. also Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 42–48. On memory in Buddhist practice and thought see Janet Gyatso, ed., *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Memory in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); and Thomas Blenman Hare, "Reading Writing and Cooking: Kūkai's Interpretive Strategies," *Journal of Asian Studies* 49 (1990): 253–73.

[5] The relevance of works such as Carruthers's, which deal primarily with Roman and European cultures, and of those non-Western traditional societies discussed here, lies in the recency of modern Western concepts of textuality and memory. The premodern scholastic cultures described by Yates and Carruthers elaborated and systematized many concepts of mind and memory that were current throughout the ancient world and are still held in many cultures. Therefore the comparison and contrast between these systems and rabbinic scholasticism is warranted as long as the important differences between these cultures are kept in mind.

[6] For bibliographies on orality in early rabbinic Judaism see the important discussion in H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 35–49; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black (Edinburgh: Clark, 1979), 2:337–38; and Shmuel Safrai, "Oral Torah," in *The Literature of the Sages* (Philadelphia: Fortress

tion has begun only recently.[7] A comprehensive program of research on this subject would entail collecting many scattered references, analyzing them according to type and period, and correlating them with internal evidence of mnemonics in talmudic literature.[8] In the absence of such a study, the following is intended to be a brief outline of the issue, sketching in fairly broad strokes the methodological and historical significance of memory for the study of rabbinic Judaism and indicating some ancient Jewish strategies for harnessing it for the sake of Torah.

Rabbinic teaching is often referred to as the Oral Torah, *Torah she-be'al peh.* This designation was not always applied by the early rabbis to their enterprise.[9] Still, the term has become a common one, and the claim thought to be represented by that term—that rabbinic literature represents an orally transmitted Torah—has had a deep influence on the historiography of Judaism in late antiquity.[10] Much of the debate on the oral

Press, 1987), 1:35–119. The major study of the subject to this date is Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Lund: C. WE. K. Gleerup and Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1961); for a critique of this work's historical argument cf. Morton Smith, "A Comparison of Early Christian and Early Rabbinic Traditions," *JBL* 82 (1963): 169–76; the book does, however, include an important collection and discussion of rabbinic traditions on oral transmission. Cf. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine,* 83–99; Jacob Neusner, "Oral Torah and Oral Tradition: Defining the Problematic," in *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1979), 59–75. See also the studies cited in the following note. The best and most up-to-date discussion of the issue, however is Martin S. Jaffee, "How Much Orality in 'Oral Torah?' New Perspectives on the Composition and Transmission of Early Rabbinic Tradition," *Shofar* 10 (1992): 53–72, which takes full account of the contemporary study of orality in traditional societies.

[7] See Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript,* 122–70; Dov Zlotnick, "Memory and the Integrity of the Oral Tradition, *JANES* 16–17 (1984–85): 229–41. There is also an account of the role of memory in rabbinic education in Nathan Morris, *The Jewish School* (London, 1937; reprint, New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1964), 112–45. For the Mishnah see Jacob Neusner, *The Memorized Torah: The Mnemonic System of the Mishnah* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985) and idem, *Oral Tradition in Judaism: The Case of the Mishnah* (New York and London: Garland, 1987). Neusner's studies are based on internal evidence, namely, the formal traits of mishnaic language. Because of the nature of the evidence and that particular program of research, these studies do not deal comprehensively with attestations in talmudic literature to mnemonic techniques. An early study that recognizes the mnemonic nature of rabbinic formulations is the highly influential work, originally published in 1924, of Marcel Jousse, *The Oral Style,* trans. Edgard Sienaert and Richard Whitaker (New York and London: Garland, 1990).

[8] For models for such a study of learning techniques we may look to David Goodblatt, *Talmudic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* (Leiden: Brill, 1975). On the possibilities for retrieving such data from talmudic literature see David Goodblatt, "Towards the Rehabilitation of Talmudic History," in *History of Judaism: The Next Ten Years,* ed. Baruch M. Bokser, (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 31–44.

[9] See Mayer Gruber, "The Mishnah as Oral Torah: a Reconsideration," *JSJ* 15 (1984): 112–22; Jaffee, "Orality."

[10] Jaffee, "Orality," shows that until the time of the Geonim, when the idea that the

nature of rabbinic learning in recent decades has centered on the critical question of the historical reliability of early rabbinic texts. Those who have argued that rabbinic literature originated in oral legal traditions and authentic statements of the early sages have often used that argument for the purpose of showing that rabbinic traditions had been transmitted faithfully for generations before having been written down.[11] This view was challenged by those who argued that mishnaic literature originated in texts formulated for oral recitation.[12] In the light of what we now know about the dynamic relationship between writing and recitation in antiquity, the strategies of oral and mnemonic composition that undoubtedly reside in the Mishnah and related texts do not seem quite so anomalous.

As important as this debate is for rabbinic history, it is now becoming clear that it bears on other issues besides that of how ancient or useful information in rabbinic texts is for historical reconstruction. Indeed, the latter question is quite independent of some of the issues raised by the study of orality in ancient Judaism. For example, it is possible that the degree of literacy in a society has a deep influence on its modes of thought.[13] At the same time, recent studies show that in predominantly oral societies in which literacy has increased, the introduction of written texts in fact serves the culture of memorization. Although a literate culture has the capacity to store information in written texts, those texts often do not displace the adept memorizer; intellectuality is still conceived in terms of the scholar's command of memorized text.[14] Those written texts that do not function

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substance of rabbinic law was transmitted from Sinai to the rabbis was an important argument against the Karaites, the term *Torah she-be-'al peh* referred to the rabbinic process of learning and explication of written rabbinic texts. See also below.

[11] See, for example, Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript,* and Safrai, "Oral Torah."

[12] See Smith, "Comparison." Building on Lieberman's thesis in *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine,* Jacob Neusner, "Oral Torah," argued that the rabbinic process of oral composition was specifically formulated to emulate the dual revelation of Torah at Sinai. Recently, this thesis has been modified; see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction,* 47–48, and Jaffee, "Orality."

[13] On this idea see Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (1967; reprint, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970); on its implications for the study of the New Testament see Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark and Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). Cf. William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 12–18; Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); and the studies cited in the following note.

[14] See Ruth H. Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication* (New York: Oxford, 1988); Carruthers, *Book of Memory;* see especially her Afterword, pp. 258–60, on the conventional assumptions underlying the ways scholars read the literature of classical and medieval literate cultures. Sam Gill, "Nonliterate Traditions and Holy Books: Toward a New Model," in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective,* ed. Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1985),

as sacred objects in themselves serve in those societies primarily as mnemonic aids.[15]

Whether or not rabbinic texts originated in oral form, it has been demonstrated that mishnaic literature has been formulated for easy memorization.[16] Moreover, it is clear that the learning and transmission of written texts, mishnaic tradition, and the rabbinic discussion of those texts entailed memorization and oral recitation.[17] Thus for our purposes it is not necessary to decide whether the importance of the faithful memorization and oral transmission of the words of the sages in rabbinic religion demonstrates that rabbinic texts do in fact preserve those words. Rather, it is important to this discussion that there was such an ethic, and that it had practical consequences for religion and social status.

MEMORIZATION AND THE CURRICULUM

In traditional rabbinic education, the basic texts were to be memorized before they were understood and discussed. B. Abod. Zar. 19b contains this advice: "One should always learn Torah and afterwards contemplate [*yehegeh*] it; as it is stated, 'the Torah of the Lord [is his delight]'—and continues: 'and he contemplates [*yehegeh*] his Torah' (Ps. 1:2). Rava said: A man should always acquire knowledge,[18] even if he forgets, and even if he does not know what he is saying." These statements presuppose two stages of learning: the first, in which the text is acquired or memorized, and the second, in which the act of analytic review of the passage (denoted by the verb *hgh*) takes place. The statement attributed to Rava stresses that the student should memorize even if he does not understand what he is reciting.[19]

This principle held true for Greco-Roman antiquity in general, and indeed for many traditional educational systems.[20] In fact, there are indications that in some societies it was considered detrimental for students

224–39, gives examples of communities that are traditionally nonliterate and that look down upon literate Western society for carrying its tradition in books rather than in memory.

[15] See Graham, *Beyond the Written Word,* 177–78. Cf. below on the mnemonic value of rabbinic texts.

[16] See Neusner, *The Memorized Torah.*

[17] Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript.*

[18] *Ygrs;* however, see Jastrow, *Dictionary,* 270–71.

[19] On a medieval application of this passage see a letter by Israel Gaon published in Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (New York: Ktav, 1972), 1:174, quoted in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 2: 564 n. 8.

[20] The standard account of the role of memorization in the Greco-Roman educational system is H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity,* trans. George Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956); see also Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); and William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 30–33 and elsewhere. For other traditional systems, see the following notes.

to understand something they had learned in the early stages of education. S. D. Goitein, in the course of describing the educational system of Genizah society, recounts how teachers in the traditional Morrocan Jewish schools he had observed were particularly proud of their students' having memorized large bodies of material—such as the complex talmudic passages in Aramaic—that they did not understand; indeed, the teachers were perplexed when Goitein was less than approving of the system.[21] In a similar way, young Brahmins are taught ancient Vedic ritual texts syllable by syllable, although they do not understand a word of the Sanskrit they are memorizing.[22]

Societies that make this distinction acknowledge in a way that memorization and knowledge are not exactly the same thing. For real knowledge of a text—even for basic retention of its words—it is not sufficient to be able to recite it. It should be known literally backwards and forwards. As Carruthers explains, intellectuals looked down upon those who could simply recite texts by rote.[23] The Greco-Roman and medieval mnemonic systems were designed to place the words and topics of a text in a mental picture in such a way that it could be recalled in any order—taken out, as it were, like objects on a shelf.

There is evidence that for rabbinic Jews as well, standards and criteria for memorized knowledge varied according to the authority and circumstances. It was accepted that knowledge had to be accompanied by understanding. The comparison and analysis of sources was usually the last stage in a rabbi's education. This enterprise, however, required the kind of recall that could only be cultivated by intensive memory training.

Several statements and terms, such as the statement of Rava quoted above, enumerate the levels of understanding required for rabbinic learning. In m. Avot 5:21 a list of the stages of education and religious responsibility is attributed to Judah b. Tema: "Five years old for scriptures, ten years old for Mishnah, thirteen for mitzvot, fifteen for study [*talmud*]." In Avot 2:8, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai enumerates the scholastic virtues of his five students. Rabbi Eliezer is a "cistern that does not lose a drop," that is, he retains what he has learned; but R. Eleazar ben Arakh is an "overflowing spring"—this probably refers to his capacity for adding to what he has

[21] Goiten, *Mediterranean Society* 2:109. According to Goitein, the teacher replied, "Does not your honor know that trying to reason and to interpret a text before knowing it by heart is damaging to the brain?" This response bears on the physiology of memory described below.

[22] Staal, "Fidelity." For a vivid illustration of the kinetic memorization technique employed in the *Agni* ceremony see the film *Altar of Fire,* directed by Robert Gardner (Berkeley: University of California Extension Media Center, 1977).

[23] Carruthers, *Book of Memory,* 20. Perhaps there is a suggestion of this distinction in the talmudic saying in b. Soṭ. 22a that, like the magician, the professional memorizer (*tanna*) recites and does not know what he is saying.

learned by his analysis.[24] B. Hor. 14a contains a debate on which type of scholar is preferable: "*Sinai,*" the sort of scholar whose encyclopedic knowledge encompasses sinaitic revelation, or *'oqer harim*—one who "uproots mountains" with his penetrating analysis. According to this passage, the Palestinian sages decided in favor of *Sinai.*[25]

As H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger point out, rabbinic admonitions demonstrate that students were often in danger of forgetting their learning.[26] Likewise, the Sar-Torah texts sometimes complain of the tedious labor (*yegi'ah*) involved in learning Torah. Israel registers this complaint before God in the Sar-Torah text in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§282); the Sar-Torah practitioner is assured that he will be able to learn Torah "without toil" (§§281, 289). Although there were talmudic sages for whom no such complaints are recorded, we should not be too quick to dismiss our authors' concerns as those merely of poor students without substance or intellectual curiosity. To be sure, modern educational values and spans of attention differ greatly from that of the traditional societies that stressed rote memorization. But there is evidence that the process was not always taken in stride by premodern students.

In his study of traditional Islamic education in the 1920s and 1930s, Dale Eickelman shows how the monotony of learning Quran and Hadith led many students to drop out of Moroccan Islamic schools of higher learning.[27] This educational system had yet to give way to one in which the importance of memorization would be supplanted by print or mass-media culture. Rather, like the societies under study here, it was "in some ways intermediate between oral and written systems of transmission of knowledge."[28] The burden of memorizing texts by rote without explanation evidently took its toll on many students, including those who did have the wherewithal to continue their education if they had wanted to do so.

According to an Irish source cited by Philippe Borgeaud,[29] the highest-ranking scholar could recite 250 long stories and 100 short ones. When this is compared to the amount of memorization required for, say, an order of Mishnah and its external traditions, added to the volume of scriptures at

[24] See Albeck's note to this passage in C. Albeck, ed. *Shishah Sidre Mishnah: Seder Neziqin* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik and Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1973), 360; cf. Maimonides' commentary to Avot.

[25] For this general issue, see Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript,* 97–112.

[26] Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction,* 45, citing b. Yoma 38b, b. Menaḥ 99b, and m. 'Avot 3:8; cf. especially the account in b. Ned. 38a of Moses forgetting the Torah; cf. 3 Enoch §§76–77, discussed in Chapter 7.

[27] Dale F. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and Its Social Reproduction," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978): 485–516.

[28] Ibid., 487.

[29] "Memorization," *ER* 9:368, citing Georges Dumézil, "la tradition druidique et l'écriture: Le Vivant et le Mort," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 121 (1940): 125–33.

hand to any educated Jew,[30] the achievement of traditional rabbinic learning can be appreciated.

MNEMONIC DEVICES

In its emphasis on memorization and oral recitation of sources, whether written or oral, rabbinic society was therefore consonant with its Greco-Roman cultural surroundings. Some Roman orators, however, developed elaborate mnemonic systems to aid them in their tasks. These systems continued into the Middle Ages and flourished in the Renaissance.[31] What mnemonic aids were available to the Jewish sages and their students, who relied so thoroughly on memorization of legal traditions?

Educational Strategies

Research has so far uncovered no equivalent in ancient Jewish civilization to the elaborate architectural systems developed by the ancient rhetors and their descendants. Judging from rabbinic evidence, Torah was learned primarily by rote and repetition. One reason may have been the nature of the performance of the text to be memorized. The Latin and scholastic memory traditions were designed for *memoria ad res,* "memory for things," which was most applicable in rhetoric, in which some improvisation was possible around a set of standard themes. Rabbinic learning, however, involved the reproduction of the exact words of a statement—*memoria ad verba*—and so necessitated rote memorization.[32] Nevertheless, there were ways in which this task could be made easier.

Carruthers observes that failure in memory was thought to be a result of the individual's inadequate effort to impress the proper information on the mind rather than failure to recollect what was there all the time.[33] So too rabbinic statements on memory stress preparation over recollection. A tradition that had been learned properly in the first place—under the right circumstances, and formulated in the most convenient way—would stand a greater chance of remaining in the memory. It has been noted that the highly formulaic nature of Mishnaic and cognate traditions facilitated their memorization.[34] The rabbis also offered advice for effective teaching and learning. For example, the discussion of the educational process in

[30] See Goitein, *Mediterranean Society,* 2:175; Morris, *The Jewish School,* 84–96.

[31] Hajdu, *Mnemotechnische Striften,* Yates, *Art of Memory,* and Carruthers, *Book of Memory.*

[32] My thanks to Professor Harald Weinrich for suggesting to me these implications of the distinction.

[33] On conceptions of the neuropsychology of memory in antiquity and the Middle Ages see Carruthers, *Book of Memory,* 46–79.

[34] Neusner, *Memorized Torah.*

b. Abod. Zar. 19a-b quoted above also includes the question of whether it is preferable to memorize in large portions or small doses.[35]

Texts were also seen having a mnemonic function.[36] Besides the "private scroll" (*megillat setarim*), which was used by an individual scholar to remind him of certain texts, there were written texts of *aggadah,* which were recommended in a statement in the Palestinian Talmud for their usefulness in aiding memorization.[37] Professional memorizers were also employed as references. The function of such a professional, called *tanna* or *roveh,* was to act as a repository of the authoritative text of the mishnaic and extramishnaic traditions.[38] Like the students in Goitein's account (and, according to one talmudic saying, like the magician), the *tanna* did not necessarily understand what he recited.[39] However, the presence of the reciter did not free the teacher from the obligation to retain what he knew of the tradition in memory. Another important aid to memory was music.[40] There is evidence that mishnaic and talmudic texts were chanted with some kind of melody.[41]

These aids to memory lie more in the realm of educational method than specific memory techniques. There were also specific mnemonic devices available to the student, many of whom were worked into the text and structure of rabbinic literature. Chief among these were *simanim,* "signs" consisting of acronyms or phrases that stood for lists of details to be remembered.[42] These, however, do not seem to have been systematically applied.

NEUROPHYSIOLOGY AND PHARMACOLOGY

Memory, like other mental faculties, was thought in antiquity and the Middle Ages to have a physiological basis. While the theories underlying this conception ranged from Aristotelian psychology to practical medicine,

[35] Cf. Carruthers, *Book of Memory,* 50, on the idea that the memory should be "fed" in small doses.

[36] This despite occasional statements opposing the writing down of halakhah and aggadah. On this issue see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction,* 37–42.

[37] Y. Ber. 5:1 (9a). On the mnemonic function of books, corresponding to the Greek ὑπομνήματα, see Lieberman, *Hellenism,* 87–88, and Gerhardsson, 160–63.

[38] See Solomon Gandz, "The Rōbeh [*roveh*] or the Official Memorizer of the Palestinian Schools," *PAAJR* 7 (1935–36): 5–12.

[39] B. Soṭ 22a, on which see n. 23 above.

[40] On music as a mnemonic aid see Vansina, *Oral Tradition,* 46–47. For its place in Muslim education, in which the arts of cantillation of the Quran play an important part, see Graham, *Beyond the Written Word,* 100–104. When analyzing ancient written sources, we should be mindful of the extent to which they were meant to be sung.

[41] See b. Meg. 32a; cf. b. Beṣ. 24a and b. Šab. 106b.

[42] Cf. b. Erub. 104a. On these see Jacob Brüll, *Doresh le-Ṣiyyon* (Vienna, 1864); and Louis I. Rabinowitz, "Mnemonics or Memoria Technica," *EJ* 10:187–90.

it was understood that memory was directly related to the makeup and composition of the body and physical mind.[43]

A result of this conception was that medical recommendations and prescriptions appeared for the improvement of memory. These appeared in the context of instructions for the general health of the person. Although no historical relationship to our texts is suggested here, it is interesting to note affinities with ritual prohibitions found in magical and Sar-Torah ritual texts in Carruthers's summary of medieval medical advice for aiding the memory: "Drunkenness is especially bad, but so are all sorts of immoderate or superfluous activities, including sexual. . . . A diet which includes fatty meats, strong wine, vinegar, and all sour things, legumes such as beans, and especially garlic, onions, and leeks, is very bad for memory."[44] Sar-Torah rituals prescribe sexual abstinence and the avoidance of rich or luxurious foods and drink, as well as of foods such as onions and garlic. It will be argued below that these prohibitions reflect peculiar notions of ritual purity.[45] But we should also keep in mind their relationship to ancient and medieval conventional ideas about the dietary foundations of a good memory.

A discussion of memory and retention in the Babylonian Talmud also reflects this conception. B. Hor. 13b contains a collection of traditions on what increases and decreases one's capacity to memorize Torah. Positive prescriptions include eating coal-baked bread and olive oil. Detrimental effects on one's memory could result from such practices as passing between two camels or two women.[46]

These traditions were extended into the Middle Ages. A medieval midrash known as *Midrash Ma'aseh Torah,* which is a collection of enumeration sayings, lists the things that are good for mental capacity: "Five things fortify wisdom: eating baked bread as much as one requires; a round egg without salt; drinking the residue of pressing; and dipping in salt and eating."[47] Eggs and baked bread also appear in Sar-Torah recipes for memory or adjuring the Sar-Torah.[48] Ignaz Goldziher has shown that similar traditions were current in Islam.[49] Specific dietary practices for memory were

[43] Carruthers, *Book of Memory,* 47–71.

[44] Ibid., 50.

[45] See Chapter 8; Michael D. Swartz, "'Like the Ministering Angels': Ritual and Purity in Early Jewish Mysticism and Magic," *AJS Review* 19 (1994): 135–67.

[46] On this discussion see Martin Jaffee, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation: XXVI. Tractate Horayot* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 206–7. Cf. b. Pes. 111a, discussed in Chapter 8.

[47] *Midrash Ma'aseh Torah,* in Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 2:97.

[48] See especially §572, in the Aramaic *Sar-Torah* text in *Ma'aseh Merkavah.*

[49] I. Goldziher, "Muhammedanischer Aberglaube über Gedächtnisskraft und Vergesslichkeit; mit Parallelen aus der jüdischen Litteratur," in A. Freimann and M. Hildesheimer, eds., *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstage A. Berliner's* (Frankfurt: J. Kaufmann, 1903), 131–55.

widely shared between Muslims and Jews. One common element was the recommendation of the *baladur*, probably the Semecarpus Anacardium, known as the marking-nut.[50] In fact, a popular rhyme advised: *Ḥazor, ḥazor, ve-'al tizdaqeq le-valadur:* "repeat, repeat [one's studies] and you will not need to rely on *baladur*."[51]

The Sar-Torah traditions under study here do not always stress the conception that diet has an immediate effect on memory. It is possible that some of its dietary prohibitions reflect a concern that the body's proper constitution be maintained in order to maximize its mental capacity.[52] However, their principal significance lies in their relationship to specific Jewish and Mediterranean magical traditions.

Memory and Magic

In late antiquity, magic was called upon to assist the individual in every conceivable aspect of daily life. Jewish and other Mediterranean magical manuals and incantation texts include recipes for healing, prosperity, love, hate, invisibility, virility, popularity—in short, for purposes we might consider both pious and impious. Prominent among amulets in the Cairo Genizah are incantations for "grace and favor," that is, social acceptance among friends and family, business associates, or government officials.[53] Considering the importance of memory in both the value system and social structure of ancient Jewish society, we should not be surprised to see magical practices designed for the acquisition of memory.[54]

The corpus of the Greek magical papyri edited by Karl Preisendanz and partially translated by Hans Dieter Betz contains at least four recipes for the improvement of memory.[55] These involve some sort of ingestion of a substance or of water in which magical names have been dissolved. Such practices are also extant in Jewish magical manuals, collections of Hekhalot literature, and related corpora. They are not particularly prominent in

[50] Goldziher, "Aberglaube," 140–42; on this plant see Immanuel Löw, *Die Flora der Juden* (1924–34; reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 1:202–3.

[51] Blumenfeld, ed., *'Oṣar Neḥmad* (Vienna, 1857), 113, quoted in Goldziher, "Aberglaube," 141–42 and 142 n. 1; cf. also Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 191. Perhaps the property of this nut, which leaves a mark on the skin, is responsible for its reputation for leaving an indelible "mark" on the memories of those who use it.

[52] Cf. Chapter 8 on the reasons for ritual prohibitions.

[53] For the range and distribution of purposes of amulets in the Genizah, see Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 46–48.

[54] For a survey of medieval practices for the improvement of memory, see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 190–93.

[55] PGM 1:232–47, 3:410–23, 3:467–78; 3:424–66 is for "foreknowledge and memory."

magical manuals; one is just as likely to find incantations for protection of a woman at childbirth as a ritual for intelligence or memory.[56]

These rituals take several forms. Among the most common in the manuals are rituals for what is called *petiḥat lev,* "opening the heart." The texts often do not mention Torah specifically; rather they are for the purpose of the intellectual faculties—which, we have seen, include both memory and insight. While magical rituals, particularly potions and the like, can be quite arbitrary, the procedures for *petiḥat lev* are remarkably uniform. The following examples are taken from fragments of magical handbooks found in the Cairo Genizah. They are representative of the practice of *petiḥat lev* in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

MS. TS K1.28 is a fragment of a handbook that includes a dream inquiry and a ritual for escaping from prison. On fol. 3a the following instructions appear:

. . . ואם תרצה
לעשות פתיחת לב טהר עצמך וקח כוס של יין
ואמר המזמור על הכוס שבע פעמים ושתהו
כן יעשה ג׳ ימים בבקר ויפתח לבו בתורה
וזה אמון ובחון אלי אלי למה אתה
ואשחרך

If you want to perform the opening of the heart, purify yourself and take a cup of wine and say the psalm over the cup seven times and drink it. Thus one shall do three times in the morning and drink, and one's heart shall be opened to Torah. And this is reliable and tested. "My God, My God, why are You [. . .]"

The psalm cited afterward is probably Psalm 63.[57] The following text occurs in MS. TS K1.117 alongside a malevolent incantation for sending a fire and demons into someone's bowels:

פתיחת לב: אמור על כסא דהבדלה
ג׳ פעמים ושתה אותו אדרנוס אברינוס
חיקקאל פתחיאל חיקקיאל דחקק אל
באוריתא פתחיאל דפתח מילי אוריתא
פתחון לבי אנא פ׳ בן פ׳ לתורה לחוכמה ולבינה
וכל מה שאשמע אלמד במהרה וכל שאלמד
לא אשכח לעולם ברוך אתה יי למדני חוקך

[56] See, for example, MS. TS K1.117 below, in which a ritual for memory appears next to a malevolent incantation.

[57] The writer has conflated the opening line of Ps. 63, אלי אתה אשחרך, with that of Ps. 22, אלי אלי למה עזבתני, which appears in a different context a few lines down. For the entire fragment, see Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte,* 133–50.

> Say over the *havdalah* cup three times and drink it: 'DRYNWS 'BRYNWS ḤYQQ'L PTḤY'L, ḤYQQY'L, whom God engraved [*de-ḥaqaq 'el*] in Torah; Petaḥiel, who opened [*de-fataḥ*] words of Torah: Open my heart, I, N son of N, to Torah, to wisdom, and to understanding, and may I learn all that I hear speedily; and all that I learn may I not forget forever. Blessed are you, Lord, teach me Your statutes.[58]

The ritual employs the cup of wine used for the havdalah ceremony, which separates the Sabbath from the rest of the week. In fact, there is a widely attested custom of incorporating a ritual for wisdom and memory into the havdalah ceremony. Some manuscripts of the ninth-century *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* include an incantation to be recited over the wine of havdalah: "I adjure you *Potah,* Prince of Forgetfulness, that you remove a foolish heart from me and cast it on the mountains and heights, by these holy names: Arimimas, Ansisiel and Pataḥiel."[59] At this point the practitioner is to recite a list of biblical verses, followed by a pious petition for blamelessness, success, and peace.

So too, the geonic Babylonian magical text *Havdalah de-Rabbi Akiba* opens with a ritual for "invalidating sorcerers and for one who is harmed by an evil spirit, and one who is banished from [the presence of] his wife, and for opening the heart."[60] The praxis involves reciting a series of biblical verses and incantations over the cup of wine at havdalah in a synagogue after a ritual ablution.

Related rituals for *petiḥat lev* are found in a fragmentary magical handbook from the Cairo Genizah, TS K1.132. One instructs the practitioner to write three names in water, dissolve them, and drink the water. Another advises taking the water in which the names have been dissolved and kneading it into cakes. As Peter Schäfer points out, this procedure also appears in magical texts for wisdom and memory set into the Hekhalot literature.[61] Hekhalot texts, by and large, integrate magical elements into a richer narrative context than that usually found in the magical manuals. In one text (§§571–78), an Aramaic ritual text inserted into *Ma'aseh Merkavah* in one manuscript, the practitioner is to write magical names on a series of substances or objects and consume them, including a cup of wine, fig and olive leaves, and an egg.[62]

[58] Ps. 119:12,26,68. Cf. also §312, in the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah B, where this expression is quoted.

[59] Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., *Seder Rav 'Amram Gaon* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1971), p. 83. The passage is probably an interpolation.

[60] Gershom Scholem, "*Havdalah de-Rabbi 'Akivah: Maqor le-Masoret ha-Magiah ha-Yehudit bi-Tequfat ha-Ge'onim,*" *Tarbiṣ* 50 (1980–81): 250.

[61] Peter Schäfer, "Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *JSJ* 41 (1990): 90.

[62] See Chapter 5.

The narrative of the Sar-Torah section of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* itself contains this brief rhetorical dialogue in the course of its instructions for the recitation of powerful (and dangerous) magical names, which effect, as the text puts it, "the acquisition of wisdom; everyone who pronounces them acquires wisdom forever." "And can anyone endure it? Moses wrote three letters for Joshua and he drank. If you cannot endure it, engrave them as a mark and do not worry yourself with the words of the mighty ones" (§564).[63] Here the original link in the chain of tradition, Moses to Joshua, is the medium for the practice of writing letters and drinking them. Moses has assured Joshua's place in the succession by initiating him into the ritual ingestion of the names, which are "for fortification of wisdom and for glorification of understanding."[64]

The practice of drinking a fluid, usually wine, over which the names have been recited or in which the names have been dissolved is common to all of these rituals. In fact, at least one of the memory rituals in the corpus of the Greek magical papyri operates in the same way. PGM 1:232–47 contains these instructions for memory: "Take hieratic papyrus and write the prescribed names with Hermaic myrrh ink. And once you have written them as they are prescribed, wash them off into spring water from seven springs and drink the water on an empty stomach for seven days while the moon is in the east."[65] The text goes on to list the magical names and the ingredients of the ink.

What are we to make of this practice of drinking wine for memory? A passage from 4 Ezra may give us a clue. In that apocalypse, Ezra is given a cup of something to drink, the appearance of which was "like fire." Once he had drunk, says Ezra,

> My heart poured forth understanding,
> and wisdom increased in my breast,
> and my spirit retained its memory,
> and my mouth was opened, and was no longer closed. (4 Ezra 14:39)[66]

Like that of Rabbi Ishmael, Ezra's general enlightenment includes an enhanced memory. Memory accompanies the new information, insight, and wisdom with which he has been blessed. But there may be another dimension to this motif. Michael Stone, in his commentary to 4 Ezra, links the reference to memory to the nature of Ezra's spiritual inspiration.[67] Like

[63] Heb. *gibborim,* perhaps referring to the angels who bear the throne. However, it is unclear what their "words" might be.

[64] See further in Chapter 4.

[65] The translation is from Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri,* 9.

[66] The translation is from Michael E. Stone, *A Commentary on the Fourth Book of Ezra* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 437.

[67] Ibid., 119–20; see also 437–42.

similar figures, he presumably needed to remember the revelation he had received while in the throes of a prophetic trance. Stone also relates the cup of inspiration to the Hellenistic theme of "divine drunkenness," attested in Philo and other sources.[68] In fact, the practice of ingesting knowledge by means of drinking a potion or a liquid in which names are written is found in many cultures.[69]

The function of "opening the heart" also lies behind common medieval Jewish ceremonies of initiation into elementary education. As Ephraim Kanarfogel observes, these ceremonies, which occured at the festival of Shavuot (Pentecost), were designed to replicate the revelation at Sinai.[70] The ceremony centered on the student's physical encounter with the Hebrew alphabet. Attendant popular customs included that of licking the letters onto which honey or raisins had been placed and eating cakes onto which the letters had been inscribed.[71] Honey and cakes are ingredients in some of the memory practices we have seen; thus this custom may have had a purpose beyond conveying the idea that the child's learning should be sweet, to specific conceptions of memory magic.

Angels of Divination and Wisdom

The distinctive narrative Sar-Torah texts in the Hekhalot corpus, however, do not correspond to the common ritual pattern of gaining memory by ingestion. The rituals in those texts, in contrast to those for *petiḥat lev,* are rituals of abstention and ablution, involving fasts of three to forty days, ritual immersions, and the avoidance of all contact with impurity—

[68] De Ebrietas 146–48; see H. Lewy, *Sobria Ebrietas* (Giessen: Töpelman, 1929).

[69] Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri,* cites *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Auberglaubens* 8:1156–57 on examples of this practice. For an example in Japanese esoteric Buddhism and its interpretation see Thomas Blenman Hare, "Reading Writing and Cooking: Kukai's Interpretive Strategies," *Journal of Asian Studies* 49(1990): 253–73.

[70] Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society,* 116–17. Cf. also Herman Pollack, *Jewish Folkways in Germanic Lands (1648–1806)* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 54–55. This ceremony is depicted in an illumination to the *Maḥazor Lipsiah;* see A. Katz, "*Talmud Torah 'al ha-har ve-'al ha-Mayim,*" *Yeda' 'Am* 11 (1965): 4–8; see further Naftali Z. Roth, "*Ḥinukh yeladim le-Torah be-Shavuot,*" *Yeda' 'Am* 11 (1965): 9–12. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* ascribes central importance to the Pentecost in his account of the origins of Merkavah mysticism due to the custom of reciting Ezekiel 1 on *Shavuot.* However, these specific educational customs do not figure prominently in the Hekhalot literature; see below. For a study of these rituals and their background in rabbinic concepts of memory, see Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). On the esoteric dimensions of Torah study in Ḥaside Ashkenaz, see Elliot R. Wolfson, "The Mystical Significance of Torah Study in German Pietism," *JQR* 84 (1993): 43–77.

[71] Karanfogel, *Education and Society,* 117, notes that according to the author of *Sefer Assufot,* R. Judah the Pious qualified this detail with the stipulation that the letters should not be inscribed since they would be erased during ingestion.

especially menstrual impurity. Moreover, their goal, in apparent contrast to the *petiḥat lev* rituals in the manuals, is to bring a potent angel—the Prince of the Torah—to the practitioner.[72] It is this angel, adjured by the divine names held by the rabbi-magician and acting under God's authority, who bestows upon the human being extraordinary skill and cosmic secrets. The main antecedents to Sar-Torah texts, therefore, are rituals that concern the summoning of a figure for divination or related purposes.[73]

Divination in ancient mediterranean society was mostly carried out through essentially semiotic means—the casting of lots, interpretation of dreams, bibliomancy, physiognomy, chiromancy, and so on. Jewish divination practices were no exception.[74] There is an extensive literature concerning numerical lots (*goralot*) often related by its authors to the Urim and Thumim of the Temple or the esoteric practices of Ahitophel.[75] These means do not require an angelic messenger to tell the practitioner what he or she wants to know. Thus traditions of angelic divination are different in kind, in that the practitioner does not "decode" information available by divinitory procedure, but is told directly by heaven.

A common angelic divination practice, mentioned in the Talmud and detailed in medieval European and Middle Eastern Jewish sources, concerns the vision of the "Princes of the Thumb and Princes of the Cup." These rituals, which have been analyzed by Samuel Daiches and Joseph Dan, follow a pattern in which the practitioner places oil on the thumbnail or in a cup and gets a young boy or pregnant woman to look into it and envision the form of a man who appears. Daiches shows that this practice had its roots in ancient Babylonian divination texts, and Dan shows how it was incorporated into the mystical theology of the Ḥaside Ashkenaz.[76] A ritual text in the Hekhalot corpus that appears among dream-inquiry texts is designated for divination.[77] After prescribing a regimen of fasting for three days and reciting certain biblical verses nightly, the text continues: "On the third night, take this book in your hands and recite these names three times with the verses. And afterwards, lie on your shoulders, for

[72] Cf. the adjuration of the "Prince of Forgetfulness" in the manuscripts of *Seder Rav 'Amram* quoted above.

[73] On such practices see R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 38–50, on precedents for Karo's cultivation of a maggid; see especially pp. 46–48 on angelic figures and dream divination.

[74] See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 208–29.

[75] For examples of the *goralot* literature see Meir Backal, ed., *Sefer Goralot 'Aḥitofel ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem: Backal, 1965); idem, ed., *Goralot 'Urim ve-Tumim ha-Shalem* (Jerusalem: Backal, 1966).

[76] Samuel Daiches, *Babylonian Oil Magic in the Talmud and in the Later Jewish Literature* (London: Jews College, 1913); Joseph Dan, "'*Sare Kos ve-Sare Bohen*,'" *Tarbiṣ* 32 (1963).

[77] §502.

immediately the image of a man will come to you and tell you all you wish to know, whether it be a great thing or a small thing."

This idea has numerous parallels in mediterranean magic, most notably the *paredroi,* or "assistants," who are the subject of several rituals in the Greek Magical Papyri.[78] Such a practice also probably lies behind talmudic accounts of rabbis who fasted so that a "man of dreams" (*'ish ḥalom*),[79] or "master of dreams" (*ba'al ḥalom*)[80] would come to them in their sleep. Dream divination often, though not always, involved the adjuration of a specific angel.[81]

Similarly, necromancy had a mantic purpose; people brought up spirits of the dead so that they could give them information.[82] In Tosefta Ma'aser Sheni 5:9 a man fasts so that he might find the tithed produce that his late father had hidden.[83] However, a "man of dreams" appears to him and tells him that the rabbis will not accept the produce obtained in this way, for things learned in dreams "have no [legal] consequence" (*lo' ma'alin ve-lo' moridin*).[84] Talmudic tales clearly reflect the belief that the dead know something we do not.

These traditions are related to the Sar-Torah phenomenon in two ways. In both, the intermediacy of the angels is the key to acquiring knowledge of divine origin. Furthermore, revelation and divination have an ancient association that may go back to prebiblical times. This is suggested by Zvi Abusch in a recent article that demonstrates the correlation between the Akkadian *alaktu*—"oracular decision"—and halakhah—the rabbinic system of legal decision and action.[85] In later times, the divinitory faculties of

[78] On this phenomenon see Leda Jean Ciraolo, "Conjuring an Assistant: *Paredroi* in the Greek Magical Papyri," Ph.D. diss, University of California, Berkeley, 1992.

[79] See, for example, t. Ma'as. Sheni 5:9; cf. y. Ma'as. Sheni 4:9 (55b).

[80] B. Sanh. 30a.

[81] See the example of a dream inquiry (*she'elat ḥalom*) printed by Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo,* 47–48; contrast the Responsa from Heaven of Jacob the Pious of Marvège, (Reuven Margaliot, ed., *She'elot u-Teshuvot min ha-Shamayim le-Rabbenu Ya'aqov mi-Marvesh* [Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, n.d.]), in which the angel does not appear; see Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo,* 46 n. 3. For a translation of portions of this text see Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* (New York: Schocken, 1977), 73–79. Recent studies have shown that several passages in this collection were forged by Moses de Leon. See the literature cited in Elliot Wolfson, "Hai Gaon's Letter and Commentary on *'Aleynu:* Further Examples of Moses de León's Pseudepigraphic Activity," *JQR* 81 (1991): 368–70.

[82] For the Middle Ages see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 61–68.

[83] See Lieberman, *Tosefta Zera'im,* 270.

[84] According to Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Feshutah Zera'im,* 2:280 n. 11, following Rashi to b. Sanh. 30a, the *'ish ḥalom* refers to the angel of dreams rather than the soul of the man's departed father.

[85] I. Zvi Abusch, "*Alaktu* and *Halakhah:* Oracular Decision, Divine Revelation," *HTR* 80 (1987): 15–42. Cf. also parallels between rabbinic dream divination and midrashic method drawn out by Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism,* 68–78; see now also Maren Niehoff, "A Dream Which Is Not Interpreted Is Like a Letter Which Is Not Read," *JSJ* 43 (1992): 58–84.

the angels were exploited by such luminaries as the thirteenth-century scholar Jacob of Marvège and the great sixteenth-century codifier Joseph Karo.[86] Thus the Sar-Torah traditions, which claim to impart not specific information, but the capacity to learn, stand in a tradition of angelic revelation of divine secrets.

Conclusions

For ancient Jews the power of memory was bound up with one of their culture's deepest values—the study of Torah. Therefore, the magical traditions were shaped by the mythic dimensions of Torah in that culture. In light of the relationship of the Sar-Torah literature to the practice of Torah, two factors will inform our study of this literature: the prominence of narrative in the major Sar-Torah traditions, and their emphasis on the cultivation of angels for the acquisition of Torah and memory. Both have antecedents in magical and rabbinic literatures, and those literatures will prove valuable in understanding the Sar-Torah phenomenon.

The Sar-Torah tradition developed a distinct set of symbols, ideal figures, and variations of midrashic tradition. These are manifest in the narrative texts in Hekhalot literature that concern the Sar-Torah practice. It is to those narratives that we now turn.

[86] See n. 81.

PART II

The Sar-Torah Texts

Chapter 3

THE TEXTS

ALTHOUGH aspects of the Sar-Torah tradition can be found in several corpora, the Sar-Torah tradition is most fully developed in the Hekhalot literature. Among the extant sources, only in the Hekhalot corpus do we find an authentic genre consisting of narrative, literary patterns, common protagonists, and interrelated pericopae. There, too, redactors have integrated the Sar-Torah materials into the broader framework of the ascent to heaven, descriptions of the cosmos, and instructions for the learning and recitation of divine names. Because of this, it is necessary to analyze the Sar-Torah and related passages in their complexity, and from there to proceed to the issues of ritual and self-conception.

This analysis will include closely related materials as well, particularly rituals and stories concerning the cultivation of the Sar ha-Panim, the recitation of the "great name" and divinitory rituals. Here the texts are listed and described briefly. They are translated and analyzed in detail in the next two chapters.

THE TEXTS

Sar-Torah Texts in Hekhalot Literature

The following group of texts appear among the major texts in the *Synopse* and concern the Sar-Torah. Most are narrative texts in which a rabbi is instructed in the proper Sar-Torah procedure.

THE CHAPTER OF RABBI NEḤUNIAH BEN HA-QANNAH

The most widely distributed Sar-Torah complex is story of Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions to Rabbi Ishmael regarding acquisition of skill in Torah, which is called *Pereq Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah* (The Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah) in MS. Vatican 236 (§307).[1] This complex consists of two versions. The first (version A) is appended to *Hekhalot Rabbati* at §§278–80 and at §§677–79 in *Merkavah Rabbah* (on which see below). The second (version B) appears in §§307–14 in one principal manuscript.

[1] For more information about the manuscripts cited here, see Schäfer, *Synopse,* viii–xxii; idem, *Geniza-Fragmente;* and idem, "Handschriften zur Hekhalot-Literatur," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 11 (1983): 113–93.

MERKAVAH RABBAH

A set of brief Sar-Torah traditions occurs in a Hekhalot miscellany that has come to be known as *Merkavah Rabbah.*[2] This text appears at §§675–87[3] in three principal manuscripts: MSS. NY JTSA 8128 (NY 8128), Oxford 1531 (Oxf. 1531) and MS. Munich 40 (M40). §§675–76 consists of a testimony regarding the acquisition of the esoteric secrets contained in the following tradition. It includes a hymn, which is parallel to §544 in *Maʿaseh Merkavah* and which is analyzed in Chapter 4 below. §§678–79 are practically identical to Version A of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah. §§680–87 consists of instructions for the Sar-Torah praxis (§§680–84), followed by an account of Rabbi Ishmael's reception before the divine throne (§§685–87).

MAʿASEH MERKAVAH

Maʿaseh Merkavah, one of the most important Hekhalot texts, is a complex of separate texts that have been redacted together into the framework of dialogues between Rabbis Akiba, Ishmael, and Neḥuniah concerning the ascent to heaven and encounter with the Sar-Torah and Sar ha-Panim or *Mal'akh ha-Panim.* This text exists in two principal recensions. Both recensions include a Sar-Torah section (§§560–70). In this writer's study of *Maʿaseh Merkavah,* it has been designated as Section II. The text opens (§554) with a hymn which is related to the Sar-Torah hymn in *Merkavah Rabbah* in §§675–76.[4] In addition, §§560–65 is closely related to the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah and follows its general structure.[5]

In addition, one manuscript of *Maʿaseh Merkavah* (MS. NY 8128) contains an Aramaic Sar-Torah text that was inserted between Sections 2 and 3. This text is not an integral part of *Maʿaseh Merkavah,* and so was not analyzed in that study. However, it is relevant to this investigation as it is not related directly to the other principal Sar-Torah texts and includes unusual Sar-Torah practices and motifs. This text will be analyzed separately from the Rabbi Neḥuniah complex in Chapter 5 below.

HEKHALOT RABBATI §§281–307

Hekhalot Rabbati can be considered the paradigmatic Hekhalot text. The major portion of *Hekhalot Rabbati* depicts a stage-by-stage journey, here called a descent, through the Hekhalot to the divine throne. However, most recensions of *Hekhalot Rabbati* include texts of other genres as well,

[2] On *Merkavah Rabbah,* see Peter Schäfer, "Prolegomena zu einer kritischen Edition und Analyse der Merkavah Rabba," *FJB* 5 (1977): 65–101.

[3] On the determination of the end of this section, see the analysis in Chapter 4.

[4] See Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 107–10.

[5] Ibid., 86–89.

including a widely distributed story of the "Ten Martyrs,"[6] and other medieval apocalypses.[7]

Among these appendixes to the ascent text of *Hekhalot Rabbati* is a Sar-Torah story that is significant both for its narrative and the ritual it describes. This story appears at §§281–307 in all of the manuscripts published in the *Synopse*. In this story, attributed to Rabbi Ishmael in the name of Eliezer the Great, the secret of the Sar-Torah is revealed to Zerubbabel and the sages of the Second Temple at the Temple site (§§297–98). The narrative is introduced by a poetic dialogue (§§281–94) between the angels and God concerning the prospect of revealing the secrets of Torah to Israel. This story also served as a source for a polemical poem entitled *Sefer Milḥamot Adonay,* "The Book of the Wars of the Lord," by the tenth-century Karaite writer Salmon ben Yeruḥim.[8] Other instructions by Rabbi Neḥuniah follow the Zerubbabel story at §§298–307.[9]

ḤOTAM HA-MERKAVAH (THE "OZHAYAH FRAGMENT")

This unique set of Genizah fragments, first published by Gruenwald and then by Schäfer, contains a series of treatises and short passages regarding the ascent to the Merkavah and the Sar-Torah. These three fragments are probably from the same codex and have been dated to the eleventh century.[10] Here they are listed according to their number in Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente:*

G8: MS. TS K21.95C
G22: MS. TS K21.95G
G9: MS. Oxf. Heb. c.65.6

G8 consists of two attached leaves from the same codex. The narrow leaf, which is designated by Schäfer as fol. 1, contains material related to the anthropomorphic text known as *Shi'ur Qomah.*[11] Fol. 2 contains a

[6] On the Ten Martyrs Apocalypse see Gottfried Reeg, *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyren* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985); and Dan, *Ha-Sippur ha-'Ivri,* 62–68.

[7] On the structure of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* see Smith, "Observations;" Arnold Goldberg, "Einige Bemerkungen zu der Quellen und den redaktionellen Einheiten der grossen Hekhalot," *FJB* 1 (1973): 1–49; and Peter Schäfer, "Zum Problem der redaktionellen Identität von *Hekhalot Rabbati,*" in *Hekhalot-Studien,* 63–74.

[8] See Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 518–22.

[9] This story is translated and analyzed in Swartz, "*Hekalot Rabbati* §297–307"; and in Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 429–39.

[10] Gruenwald, "*Qeṭa'im Ḥadashim Mi-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot,*" *Tarbiṣ* 38 (1969): 300–319; idem, "*Tiqqunim ve-He'arot le-Qeṭa'im Ḥadashim Mi-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot,*" *Tarbiṣ* 39 (1970): 216–17; and Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente.* Gruenwald's edition is useful not only for the notes on the text, but for his sound restorations of the lacunae in the text.

[11] This leaf was not published by Gruenwald. On the *Shi'ur Qomah,* see Martin S. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah; Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions.*

narrative ascent text that seems to have borne the title *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah,* or "the Seal of the Merkavah."[12] David Halperin and Martha Himmelfarb refer to it as the Ozhayah fragment, after the angel who instructs the narrator in the procedure of ascent.[13] This text is significant to our discussion because it integrates ascent and Sar-Torah traditions, and contains evidence for the role of the sacred book in the esoteric literature.[14] G22 contains Sar-Torah and angelological traditions. G9, which was also published by Martin S. Cohen, contains mostly *Shi'ur Qomah* materials and will not be analyzed in this study.[15] In the textual analysis below, the Sar-Torah elements of these texts will be described briefly.

HEKHALOT ZUṬARTI §336 AND §340

A brief passage relevant to the Sar-Torah tradition occurs in the compilation known as *Hekhalot Zuṭarti.*[16] This passage, which occurs in §336 in MSS. NY 8128, Oxf. 1531, M40, Dropsie 436 (D 436), and Munich 22 (M22), contains a brief petition to God to open the heart of the individual not only to words of Torah, but to "any other words in the world." This passage is represented as having been taught by God to Moses when he ascended to heaven.

MAGICAL TEXTS IN THE CAIRO GENIZAH

Also relevant to our examination of the Sar-Torah tradition are texts in the Cairo Genizah that adjure the Sar-Torah or provide instructions for such adjurations. Some of these are brief fragments found on separate leaves, like amulet texts, and many of these appear in magical handbooks. These texts are significant as they attest to the persistence of the Sar-Torah tradition and to the active use of such rituals. Texts of this type will be considered as they bear on particular topics in the course of this study.

Sar ha-Panim Texts

MERKAVAH RABBAH

The most extensive Sar ha-Panim text is an adjuration ritual in *Merkavah Rabbah* §§623–39. This passage, first published by Schäfer, is notable as a

[12] This leaf is designated as Fol. 1 in Gruenwald, *Qeta'im.*

[13] See Martha Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature," *HUCA* 59 (1988): 86–88, and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 368.

[14] See Chapter 7.

[15] Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions,* 183–86.

[16] On *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* and its redactional status, see Peter Schäfer, "Aufbau und redaktionelle Identität der Hekhalot Zutrati," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982): 569–82, reprinted in Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien,* 50–62. Cf. Rachel Elior, *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought Supplement 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982).

striking example of a ritual designed to adjure an angel to come to the individual. It also includes an unusual regimen of abstention and immersion as well as an extensive incantation.

§501

A brief Sar ha-Panim incantation appears in MSS. NY 8128 and Oxf. 1531 in §501, a discrete paragraph that appears among other magical traditions.[17] In MS. M22, it appears as §542. This paragraph contains an adjuration and brief instructions for a ritual.

MS. G19

MS. Antonin 186 (Schäfer, G19), is a single leaf dated to the end of the eleventh century.[18] It contains an otherwise unknown incantation to Metatron as Sar ha-Panim and instructions for a ritual to accompany the recitation of the incantation.

Manuscripts of the Sar-Torah Texts

Manuscripts of Hekhalot Literature

Among the manuscripts known to us, the narrative Sar-Torah traditions appear only in manuscripts containing Hekhalot literature: that is, manuscripts that include ascent and related texts in the Hekhalot corpus. Extant manuscripts of Jewish magic that do not include these ascent traditions also lack Sar-Torah narratives—although they may include incantations for the Sar-Torah.

Manuscripts of Hekhalot literature can be divided into two categories:

1. Those copied mostly in central and southern Europe, stemming principally from the *Ḥaside Ashkenaz* and published in the *Synopse* or listed elsewhere by Schäfer.[19] These manuscripts display a good deal of affinity in their organization of Hekhalot material. Within this group, some subtle distinctions can be observed. For example, MS. M22 often varies from the other manuscripts published in the *Synopse* in organization of materials and in wording.[20]
2. Those found in the Genizah from North Africa and Islamic countries and published in *Geniza-Fragmente* and other places.[21] These manuscripts or-

[17] This section of the principal Hekhalot manuscripts includes the Great Name incantation (about which see below), dream incantations, and others.

[18] Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* 163, citing M. Beit Arie.

[19] Schäfer, "Handschriften."

[20] See Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 47–48 and 55–58, on this and related manuscripts.

[21] Schäfer, *Genizah-Fragmente* and *Hekhalot Studien;* Gruenwald, *Qeṭa'im Ḥadashim.* See also Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions,* 183–86 and 188–89.

ganize material quite differently from the first group. Striking examples can be found in Genizah manuscripts of *Hekhalot Rabbati* and 3 Enoch.[22]

The Sar-Torah Tradition in the Manuscripts

The principal narrative texts such as the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah and the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah narrative are found primarily in the European family of manuscripts. The Genizah fragments preserve a few echoes of the Sar-Torah tradition. These occur in individual incantations for the Sar-Torah unrelated to a narrative framework and, in the case of the Ozhayah fragments, are worked into a more encompassing narrative about the visitor to heaven.

Synopsis of the Texts

The following set of tables illustrates the classification of the major Sar-Torah texts in the manuscripts of the *Synopse* and the relationships between them. These tables cover the various versions of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah and the Sar-Torah texts in *Merkavah Rabbah* and *Hekhalot Rabbati.*

The Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah Complex

In Table 1, the pericopae of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah are arrayed so as to delineate the relationships between the various versions and to indicate the parallel between that complex and the narrative structure of *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* The upper portion of that table illustrates version A and the lower portion version B. The lower portion illustrates the structure of the *Merkavah Rabbah* Sar-Torah section and its parallels with the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah and *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* Numbers placed between braces ({}) do not appear in that order in the manuscript, but are parallel to the pericopae opposite to which they are located in the table. The implications of this distribution are then analyzed.

The Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah consists of a basic narrative unit set into different contexts. This unit consists of three paragraphs (§§278–80=677–80; cf. 308–9). The third paragraph, §280, is mostly elided in MS. M22 and does not appear in §309. Version A occurs at the end of *Hekhalot Rabbati* in MSS. B238, M22, and V228. In the former two manuscripts it comes between the ascent section of *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§81–277) and the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text (§281–306); in MS. V228, it follows after the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah story. In MS. B238 it is labeled *tosefet,* "addendum" (§278) and it is probable that this passage

[22] See Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction," 11–12; Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* Text G12.

TABLE 1
Sar-Torah Texts
1. The "Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah" Complex

Version A			
Merkavah Rabbah	PRNA		
N, O, M40	B HR-277	M22 HR-277	V HR-277
675–76	278	278	{308}
677	279	279	{309}
678	280		
679	281–306 (=HR ST)	281–306 (=HR ST)	281–306 (=HR ST) 307 308 309 310 311–12

Version B	
PRNB	MM
V	(all MSS)
313–14	560–65

2. *Merkavah Rabbah* and Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah

Merkavah Rabbah	PRNA			
N, M40, 0	B	M22	V	MM
[HZ]				
675–76				544
677–78	278–79	278–79	278–79	560–65
679	280			
680–84				

HR = *Hekhalot Rabbati*
PRN = *Pereq Rabbi Neḥuniah*
ST = Sar-Torah
HZ = *Hekhalot Zuṭarti*

B = MS. Budapest 238
M = MSS. Munich 22, 40
N = MS. NY JTSA 8128
O = MS. Oxford 1531
V = MS. Vatican 228

was inserted there into a compilation that originally proceeded directly from the ascent text of *Hekhalot Rabbati* to the Zerubbabel Sar-Torah text at §281.[23] In MSS. NY 8128, Oxf. 1531, and M40, the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah appears with other Sar-Torah material in *Merkavah Rabbah*

[23] According to Schäfer, "Handschriften," 204–5, §278–80 appears in two other manuscripts, MS. Paris Alliance Israélite H.55.A, and MS. Milan Ambrosiana B 54 Sup. In the Paris manuscript, the pericopae is labeled *tosefet* as in MS. B 238.

(675–84). It is introduced by §§675–78, a testimony and hymn, and followed by further testimonies and instructions attributed to Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Neḥuniah.

The manuscripts thus fall into three classes. MSS. B238 and M22 constitute the first group; MSS. NY 8128, Oxf. 1531, and M40 constitute the second; and MS. V228 constitutes the third. The latter manuscript is unique in its arrangement, placing Version A after the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text at §307 and setting them into a collection of similar traditions. This collection includes a second version of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah (Version B).[24]

This distribution of material corresponds to what we know about these manuscripts from other textual studies. In *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* for example, the longer recension appears in MSS. NY 8128, Oxf. 1531, M40, and a fourth, MS. Dropsie 436, which does not include *Merkavah Rabbah* and thus lacks its version of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah. The shorter recension of that text is represented by MS. M22.[25] In the case of the Chapters of Rabbi Neḥuniah, MS. M22 is set apart from MSS. NY 8128, Oxf. 1531, and M40, and is accompanied by MS. B 236 in comprising a separate recension.

The Hekhalot Rabbati *Sar-Torah Text*

The *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text appears in the principal manuscripts of *Hekhalot Rabbati.* Schäfer has identified several recensions of *Hekhalot Rabbati* according to the distribution of sections in the text in the principal manuscript groups.[26] This text appears as the last unit of the shortest recension,[27] and is included in all of the longer recensions. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of passages in the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text. The fourth column shows parallel passages appearing elsewhere in the corpus from several manuscripts.

There are two recensions of the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text in the major manuscripts. The shorter recension is represented by MSS. NY 8128, Oxf. 1531, M40, and D436. The longer recension appears in M22, V228, and B238. The most important narrative units, the poetic preamble (§§281–94) and the story of the revelation of the Sar-Torah in the Temple and subsequent teachings (§297–303), appear in all manuscripts.

Two additional paragraphs, §§295–96, are added in MS. B238. This

[24] This manuscript also is the only one to contain the title the Chapters of Rabbi Neḥuniah, in the superscription, *pereq Rabbi Neḥuniah* at §307.

[25] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 60–62.

[26] Schäfer, "*Hekhalot Rabbati,*" in *Hekhalot-Studien,* 63–74. This list excludes MS. TS 21.95S (G1), an important Genizah fragment of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* which arranges Hekhalot material in an entirely different order.

[27] Ibid., 72, listed as 1.

TABLE 2
Manuscripts of the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah Text

shorter recension	longer recension		parallels
N, O, M40, D	M22, V228	B238	
281–94	281–94	281–94	
		295–96	N: 405–6
297–303	297–303	297–303	
	304–5	304–5	
306	306	306	HR: 153

N: §§405–6 appear in MS. N8128
HR: §153 appears in all principal manuscripts of *Hekhalot Rabbati*

passage, which is also found at §§405–6 in MS. NY 8128, describes a testimony heard by Rabbi Akiba from the divine throne concerning Enoch's transformation into Metatron. It is not related thematically to the Sar-Torah story and is labeled *tosefet,* "addendum" in MS. B238.[28] The longer recension contains §304–305, a testimony to the success of the Sar-Torah ritual. This passage is also labeled *tosefet* in MS. B238. In all manuscripts, the text concludes at §306 with a hymn of praise, which is parallel to a hymn in *Hekhalot Rabbati,* §153. In fact, MS. Oxf 1531 notes there that a portion of this prayer is contained in Chapter 7 of *Hekhalot Rabbati.* Several manuscripts elide several lines of this hymn. The fullest text appears in MS. B238.

MANUSCRIPTS OF THE SAR-TORAH TEXTS: CONCLUSIONS

The narrative Sar-Torah texts form a complex of interrelated pericopae rather than cohesive and unified works. This is especially true of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah texts, in which basic units are combined in different ways. Although the principal narrative sections of the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text appear in all manuscripts, redactors or scribes have added other units to that text at various places.

This textual state indicates the composite nature of the Sar-Torah texts. Independent units have been combined in different ways by redactors for different reasons. While this redactional trait is characteristic of Hekhalot literature as a whole, it is particularly pronounced in these texts. The textual analysis undertaken in the next two chapters will therefore pay attention both to the integrity of the individual units themselves and the program of the redactors who arranged them. Form-critical criteria will aid us in understanding how and why these texts took shape, and what they may have meant to those who composed and arranged them.

[28] Cf. the interpolated Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah in the same manuscript at §271.

Chapter 4

SAR-TORAH NARRATIVES: TRANSLATION AND ANALYSIS

THE FIRST category of Sar-Torah texts examined here consists of narratives depicting the revelation of the Sar-Torah praxis and the instruction of rabbis in the techniques. Hekhalot literature differs from other magical texts in introducing this narrative framework.

There are two major narrative Sar-Torah patterns. One, which will be called the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah complex, occurs in several places in the Hekhalot corpus and is worked into the structure of Section II of *Ma'aseh Merkavah*. The other text tells quite a different story, about the revelation of the Sar-Torah at the Temple site. This text, which will be called the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text, is appended to *Hekhalot Rabbati* in several manuscripts.

These translations follow an outline form. Each translation is accompanied by a form-critical analysis explaining the redactional principles, literary parallels, and genres informing the passage, and the major themes of the text.

The first set of stories we shall examine tell of how Rabbi Ishmael acquired the Sar-Torah secrets from his teacher, Rabbi Neḥuniah. These stories are the most common in the Sar-Torah corpus and set the pattern for the genre. They will serve to introduce the major themes of the phenomenon. We shall then proceed to an extensive Sar-Torah narrative that bears distinctive literary and historical characteristics.

THE CHAPTER OF RABBI NEḤUNIAH COMPLEX

Stories concerning Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions to Rabbi Ishmael about the Sar-Torah appear in varying forms with *Hekhalot Rabbati* and *Merkavah Rabbah*. The title Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah appears only in §307. However, to draw attention to the fact that these passages constitute a complex of textual units, they have been designated Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah A (§§278–80) and Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah B (§§307–14) and will be studied together with their parallels in *Merkavah Rabbah* and *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.

Version A: §§278–80

Version A is found at §§278–80 in MSS. M22 and B238. These paragraphs form a basic unit which was also incorporated into Version B in MS V228 at §§307–14 and into *Merkavah Rabbah* at §§677–79. In this case the passage was inserted between the ascent hymns in *Hekhalot Rabbati* which end at §277 and the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah narrative of §§281–306. It is designated *tosefet,* "addendum," in MS. B238. The following translation is based on MS. V228. The text placed between braces ({}) is elided in MS. M22.[1]

TRANSLATION

I. (§278) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. [When I was] thirteen years old Rabbi Neḥuniah saw me in great trouble, affliction, and great danger.

1. A scriptural passage that I was reading one day I would forget the next, and a Mishnaic passage that I was repeating one day I would forget the next.[2]

2. What did I do? When I saw that the Torah was not remaining with me, I took hold of myself and refrained from eating, drinking, bathing, and anointing, and deprived myself of sexual activity, and did not sing or laugh; nor did any word of song or melody pass from my mouth.

B. (§279) Immediately Rabbi Neḥuniah my teacher seized me and took me from my father's house and brought me into the Chamber of Hewn Stone,

1. and made me swear by the Great Seal, by the Great Oath that is for Zekhuriel YYY, God of Israel, who is Metatron, YYY, God of Israel, God of Heaven and God of the earth, God of gods, God of the sea and God of dry land,

2. and he revealed the praxis of the secret of Torah.

C. Then immediately my heart was enlightened {like the gates of the east,[3] and my eyes gazed into the depths and paths of Torah, and never again did I forget anything my ears heard from my teacher, of study; nor would I ever again forget anything of the paths of Torah in which I engaged for their truth.

D. (§281) Rabbi Ishmael said: If I had not engaged in the whole Torah, this praxis would be sufficient for me,} which I established

[1] This passage is translated and discussed in Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 376–77. Halperin calls this passage "the *Hekhalot Rabbati* interpolation."

[2] MS. M22: *le-yamim,* "after [a few] days."

[3] That is, where the sun rises. Reading *ke-sha'are ha-mizraḥ* for MS V228's *be-sha'are ha-mizbeaḥ,* "at the gates of the altar." Cf. the reading in *Merkavah Rabbah* §678.

for Israel—equivalent to the entire Torah, so that Israel may increase Torah without toil.

ANALYSIS

Like all Sar-Torah narratives, this story is about the success of the magic of the Sar-Torah in transforming a poor student into a great one. In the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah complex, Rabbi Ishmael tries unsuccessfully to attain this skill on his own, and must be instructed by Rabbi Neḥuniah in the Sar-Torah technique.

The narrative setting is established in I A, stating Rabbi Ishmael's difficulty in retaining what he learns—which, presumably, is the problem for which the reader would seek out this text. In A 2 he tries to rectify the problem by fasting and abstention. In this case, the purpose of Rabbi Ishmael's fast is to express his distress and contrition before God in hopes that He will take pity on him and improve his skills.[4] In B Rabbi Neḥuniah shows Rabbi Ishmael a more effective way of retaining his knowledge: He should swear by the "great seal and great oath" mentioned in B 1. C and D testify to the success of the magic. C describes his proficiency in learning, and in D he declares that the value of this incantation, which he has "established"—that is, transmitted to future generations, down to the reader—is commensurate to all his erudition in Torah, for it allows Israel to learn Torah effortlessly.[5]

This story takes place in the Temple in Jerusalem. Rabbi Neḥuniah takes his young colleague into the Chamber of Hewn Stone, which was the meeting place for the Sanhedrin according to m. Mid. 5:4. The Temple is the setting for most of the extant narrative Sar-Torah texts; the most striking example is the Sar-Torah text of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* which takes place at the site of the unbuilt Second Temple in the time of Zerubbabel. In that text, the Temple location is an integral part of the narrative. The elders complain of having to study Torah while at the same time building the Temple; by means of the mystery of the Sar-Torah they are able to alleviate that burden. In the main ascent narrative of *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§198 and following), Rabbi Neḥuniah's journey to the Merkavah takes place in the Temple. There the literary context is an apocalypse in which Rabbi Neḥuniah descends to the Merkavah for the purpose of understanding Israel's fate. In our text, the setting of the Temple does reinforce the notion that Rabbi Ishmael receives an extraordinary revelation—one in which there is

[4] The purpose of fasting in this literature is discussed in Chapter 6.

[5] The logic employed here can be compared to that implied in a well-known statement in m. Pe'a 1:1 (cf. b. Qid. 39b): *talmud torah ke-neged kulam,* "the study of Torah is equivalent to all [the other good deeds in that list]"—because it leads to them all. In an analogous way, this magic is said to be equal to all other Torah, because it leads to its proliferation.

a visionary element.[6] But its major purpose is to validate the Sar-Torah ritual and emphasize its solemnity and orthodoxy.

A talmudic source places Rabbi Ishmael in the Temple in a similar fashion. In b. Ber. 7a Rabbi Ishmael enters the Holy of Holies to offer incense and sees "Akhatriel, YH, YHWH of Hosts" seated on a throne. In both cases, our Sar-Torah texts and the talmudic story, the narrative setting is an obvious anachronism, and the implication that Rabbi Ishmael was the high priest[7] is a conspicuous historical error. Scholem notes that "the real Ishmael was still a boy at the time of the destruction of the Temple" and offers a very plausible suggestion as to the origin of this anachronism.[8] T. *Ḥal.* 1:10 implies that Rabbi Ishmael's father Elisha was the high priest. Scholem suggests that the father's title was later applied to the son.[9] If the authors of the Sar-Torah stories began with this designation in mind, it would not have seemed far-fetched to place him in the Temple.[10]

The purpose of the narrative is clearly to validate the magical names and recommend them to the reader. In his remarks on this passage, Halperin records his impression that this story has "a very modern ring to it," and likens it to toothpaste advertisements that credit a young woman's success in romance to her use of the advertised brand.[11] Stories like the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah do indeed function as advertisements. In fact, counterparts to this narrative form can be found closer to this source, in ancient and medieval magical and esoteric literature. Magical texts, Jewish and other, abound in "historiolae"—literary patterns that commend their techniques or lore to the reader by attesting that particular historical figures performed the miracles or attained the powers for which they are famous by means of the magic or esoteric techniques contained in the very text the reader now holds.[12] This *topos* can take the form of a brief reference to a biblical hero, or a literary pattern such as the "chain of tradition" in the *Merkavah Rabbah* Sar-Torah unit in §§675–76. This and related

[6] On the Temple as a locus of visionary experience, cf. Wolfson, *Speculum That Shines,* 19–20.

[7] Cf. Lev. 16:2–3.

[8] Scholem, *Major Trends,* 356 n. 3.

[9] Perhaps *Rabbi Ishmael ben 'Elisha kohen gadol* came to mean, "Rabbi Ishmael son of Elisha, the high priest" rather than "Rabbi Ishmael, son of Elisha the high priest." Cf. t. Men. 13:20 which inveighs against priestly families, including "the House of Elisha."

[10] The problem of historical anachronisms and their implications for the study of this literature is discussed in Chapter 7.

[11] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 377.

[12] For an early definition of the historiola see F. Ohrt, "Segen," *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglabens* (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1935–36), 7:1590–91. My thanks to David Frankfurter for this reference. See further the more extensive discussion of this form in Chapter 7.

means of validation and recommendation are analyzed in depth in Chapter 7. In our story, as in all narrative Sar-Torah texts, the need for validation inspires a distinct narrative genre in which a rabbi's celebrated erudition is ascribed to the magic of the Sar-Torah. This pattern, for example, forms the structure for the Sar-Torah section of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (Section II), which is related to this complex.

That the primary concern of the author is to introduce the reader to the proper ritual actions is evident from a curious detail in A 2. Rabbi Ishmael tells us that he abstained from sexual relations—this from a thirteen-year-old boy who lives in his father's house. While it is possible that the author presumed that young Rabbi Ishmael was married, it is more likely that his wish to give the reader comprehensive instructions about what activities were to be avoided in such situations prevailed over his interest in verisimilitude.[13]

This passage does not make it clear, however, exactly what the great seal and great oath are. It is possible that they involve the names of the angel in B 1. However, one would expect the story to be followed by a more elaborate incantation such as the prayer of the "Great Seal and Awesome Crown," which comes after Version B at §§318–21.[14] What does follow in these two manuscripts, however, is the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah story in §§281–306 in which a "seal" and "crown"—that is, magical names—are revealed to the elders of Israel. It is possible, therefore, that the scribe of the *Vorlage* of these two manuscripts wished to use this narrative as an additional testimony to introduce the more impressive Sar-Torah unit in *Hekhalot Rabbati.*

The angel is called Zekhuriel in this version of the story. This name, based on the verb *zkr,* "remember," seems to be a scribal variant of another common name for the Sar-Torah, Zevudiel, and is quite appropriate for a praxis, the purpose of which is to improve one's memory.[15] However, the name Zevudiel is more prevalent in these texts than Zakhoriel and we cannot be sure whether one is derived from the other.

Sar-Torah narratives often employ terms for rabbinic study. Here they are prominent in A 1. The verb *qr'* refers to the study of Scripture; *šnh*

[13] This sort of incongruity may have led the author of the brief ritual passage in *Hekhalot Zutarti* §424 to stipulate how both unmarried and married men were to avoid sexual pollution: "youths" were to avoid seminal emission, and married men were to stay away from their wives. Cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 375. On §424 see Chapter 6 below.

[14] The prayer of the "Great Seal and Awesome Crown" also appears in *Merkavah Rabbah* §§651–54. A "great oath," which was given to Joseph by Gabriel, is mentioned in a Genizah amulet, TS K1.168.26. See Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 145 and 156, and Chapter 7 below.

[15] See also Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 377.

refers to the act of learning of mishnaic tradition by repetition. The term *talmud* can refer to the disciplined and analytical study of biblical, mishnaic, and extramishnaic traditions and need not refer to the completed documents we know as Talmud; thus the occurrence of this term cannot be used to date this passage.[16] These terms, although used here correctly, would have been known to anyone familiar with rabbinic civilization and are not evidence of any special erudition on the part of the authors.

SUMMARY

This brief story, a fundamental building block for the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah complex, contains the basic elements of Sar-Torah narratives: Rabbi Ishmael's ascetic ritual, Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions to his student regarding a magical name, and the transformative power of that name. The story of that name's success in making the young Rabbi Ishmael into a great scholar serves as an advertisement to the reader.

Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah Version B: §§307–14

Version B of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah appears only in MS. V228 at §§307–14. This text incorporates a variant of the basic unit found in §§278–80 into a larger composition. This larger text also includes a second story of Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions to Rabbi Ishmael at §§313–14, which follows a narrative pattern much like that of Version A. Thus the text contains two similar narratives, interspersed with instructions for performing the ritual. Following the translation below, this structure is examined in detail.

TRANSLATION

I. (§307) The Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah, which he taught to Rabbi Ishmael:

A. Who can tell the mighty deeds of YWY, and who can proclaim the praise[17] of the King of Kings?—these are the ministering angels.[18]

[16] On the term *talmud*, see Ḥanokh Albeck, *Mavo la-Talmudim* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1969), 3–7. The term also appears in the Sar-Torah hymn in §§675–76 (*Merkavah Rabbah*) and its parallel in §544 (*Ma'aseh Merkavah*).

[17] Ps. 106:2.

[18] This last clause is a parenthetical gloss explaining the phrase *melekh malkhe ha-melakhim*, literally "king of the kings of kings." The word *melakhim*, "kings," is taken here as *mal'akhim*, "angels," that is, God is the king of the kings of angels. These two words are often conflated in magical and other texts; see Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts*, 74–75. On this rabbinic and liturgical appellation *melekh malkhe ha-melakhim*, see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 119 n. 40 and the sources cited there.

II. (§308) Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. [When I was] thirteen years old Rabbi Neḥuniah saw me in great trouble and great affliction.
1. A scriptural passage that I was reading and repeating I would forget the next day.
2. And when I saw that my study was not being sustained in me, I stood and refrained from eating, drinking, washing, anointing, and sexual activity, and no word of song or melody passed from my mouth.
B. (§309) Rabbi Ishmael said:
1. Immediately Rabbi Neḥuniah seized me and took me from my father's house and took me into the Chamber of Hewn Stone,
2. and made me swear by the Great Seal, by the Great Oath,
3. in the name of YD NQYP YD NQWY YD HYRṢ YD ṢWQṢ, by His Great Seal, by Zevudiel YH Akhatriel YH, in heaven and earth.
C. And when I heard this great mystery, my eyes were enlightened and all that I heard—whether scriptures, Mishnah, or anything—I would not forget any more. The world was renewed {for me} in purity, and it was as if I had come into a new world.
D. (§310) And now, any student whose study is not sustained in him should stand and bless and rise and adjure
1. in the name of MDGWBY'L GYWTY'L ZYWT'L ṬNRY'L HWZHYH SYN SGN SWBYR'WHW—they are all Metatron[19]—MRG who is Metatron, GWW, who is Metatron, ṬNRY'L, who is Metatron, HWZHYH, who is Metatron, SYN, who is Metatron, SGN, who is Metatron, SWBYR'YHW, who is Metatron.
2. And because of the love by which they love him on high, they say to him, ZYWTY'L, servant, Zevudiel YH Akhatriel YWY God of Israel,
3. YWY, YWY, "God compassionate and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and faithfulness." (Exod. 34:6)
4. Blessed be the Sage of mysteries and the Lord of secrets.
III. Chapter 2.
A. Rabbi Ishmael said: How should someone use this incantation (*davar*)?
1. His mouth should utter names and his fingers should count one hundred and eleven times. He may not add or subtract, and if he adds to them and is harmed, his blood is on his head.
2. And he who adjures must stand and uphold, in the name of Margobiel.

[19] This phrase is an Aramaic gloss.

3. —as in the first chapter, until he comes to[20] "slow to anger and of great kindness."
4. Blessed be you, YY, who revives the dead.

IV. (§311)

A. Rabbi Ishmael said:

1. Any student who recites this great mystery, his stature will be pleasing, his speech will be accepted and fear of him will be rest on (fellow) creatures, and his dreams will be calm, and he will be saved from all kinds of tribulations and witchcraft, and from the judgment of Gehinnom.

V. (§312) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. Any student who recites this great mystery should recite it repeatedly[21] and say:

1. "Blessed are You, teach me Your statutes." (Ps. 119:12, 26, 68) You are good and cause good; teach me Your statutes.

VI. (§313) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. When I was thirteen, my mind was occupied with this incantation[22]

1. and I returned to Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah my teacher.

a. I said to him:[23] The Prince of the Torah, what is his name?

b. And he said to me: Yofiel is his name.

B. Immediately I stood and afflicted myself for forty days,

1. and I recited the Great Name,
2. until I caused him to descend. He came down in a flame of fire, and his face had the appearance of lightning.[24] When I saw him, I trembled, was frightened, and fell back.
3. He said to me: Human being! What quality do you have that you have disturbed the great household?[25]
4. I said to him: it is revealed and known before Him Who spoke and the world came into being that I did not bring you down for [my] glory,[26] but to do the will of your Master.

C. Then he said to me: "Human being, son of a stinking drop, worm and vermin![27]

[20] This clause is in Aramaic.

[21] Heb., *be-mishnah.*

[22] Heb. *Davar;* cf. II A above. It could also mean, less specifically, "this matter."

[23] Reading *lo* for *li.*

[24] Cf. Ezek. 1:14.

[25] *Pamalia gedolah.* The term *pamalia* (*familia*) is used frequently in rabbinic literature for the heavenly hosts.

[26] Reading *lkbwdy* for the manuscript's *lkbwdk,* "your glory."

[27] *Ṭipah seruḥah, rimmah ve-tolea'.* In Avot 3:1: (cited above in n. 9) the grave is depicted as *meqom 'afar, rimah, ve-tolea',* "a place of worm and vermin." Here the these phrases are paired to mean that the human being comes from "a stinking drop" and goes to a place of "worm and vermin." On this figure see Chapter 6 below.

1. (§314) Whoever wants it to be revealed to him[28] must sit fasting for forty days, perform twenty-four immersions every day, and not eat anything defiling. He must not look at a woman, and must sit in a totally dark house."
2. In the name of GMNWNY YKTD' TRTR' KS'N, Throne, peg of the world,[29] DMLY "WT 'YṬB'WT ḤGWL ḤGWL N'BYK N'BYB, ḤBYB 'NHWN SSKYH DQKG ḤMYH ḤZDQH ŠNH SNBRK ḤZ KRD GYHRZH YHWH ṢRŠGW 'ḤZYY GRTWN'H, Blessed be the name of His Majesty's Glory forever and ever, in the name of 'HYH KMWNY YKRRH KS'N Throne, peg of the world, 'H 'WT N'BYB 'BYB HYH YHWH of Hosts, magnificent, Lord, 'H, YHWH of Hosts, holy, holy, holy, Blessed be the name of His Majesty's Glory forever and ever. End.

ANALYSIS

This text is introduced with a superscription (I) containing the title "The Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah," and concludes with *seliq*, "end." The text has been divided by the scribe or his Vorlage into two major sections, the second of which is designated as "Chapter Two" in the manuscript at §310. The first section (II) is the parallel to Version A (§§308–9). The second (III–VI) consists of three appended instructions and testimonies at III–V (§§310–12) and an additional narrative at VI (§§313–14). This latter story tells how Rabbi Ishmael conjures the Sar-Torah, who, after interrogating him, teaches the correct procedure.

The redactor intended to link two separate Rabbi Neḥuniah narratives (II and VI). He did so using two sets of instructions (III and V) and a testimony (IV). Those three unrelated paragraphs supplement the instructions in II and provide further affirmation of the authority and power of the magic. Taken together, the two separate Rabbi Neḥuniah stories can be read sequentially. That is, it is possible to read the entire text as telling how in VI, after Rabbi Ishmael used the incantation mentioned in II, he was still vexed about its details. He therefore conjured the Sar-Torah, who instructed him in the proper procedure. Nonetheless, VI, like the three units preceding it, was composed independently of the first Rabbi Neḥuniah story in II.

At II A, there are minor differences between this text's version of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah and Version A in §278. For example, in §278 the verbs *qr'* and *šnh* are applied to the terms *miqra* and *mishnah* respec-

[28] This clause is in Aramaic. It is unclear whether, as is supposed by this translation, the following instructions are the continuation of Yofiel's speech, or the Aramaic clause is an editor's interpolation introducing the narrator's instructions for the praxis following the preceding object lesson. Cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 378.

[29] Heb. *ytd 'wlm*. Cf. *Hekhalot Rabbati* §98.

tively, whereas in §308 the object of both verbs is the noun *miqra*.[30] From B, however, the variation is more significant. The following illustrates these differences:

PRNA	PRNB
B. (§280)	B. (§309) Rabbi Ishmael said:
1. Immediately Rabbi Neḥuniah seized me and took me from my father's house and brought me into the Chamber of Hewn Stone,	1. Immediately Rabbi Heḥuniah seized me and took me from my father's house and brought me into the Chamber of Hewn Stone,
2. and made me swear by the Great Seal, by the Great Oath	2. and made me swear by the Great Seal, by the Great Oath,
3. that is for Zakhoriel YYY, God of Israel, who is Metatron, YYY, God of Israel, God of Heaven and God of the earth, God of gods, God of the sea and God of dry land,	3. in the name of YD NQWP YD NQWY YD HYRṢ YD ṢWQṢ, by His Great Seal, by Zevudiel YH Akhatriel YH, in heaven and earth.
3. and he revealed the praxis of the secret of Torah.	
C. Then immediately my heart was enlightened {like the gates of the east, and my eyes gazed into the depths and paths of Torah, and never again did I forget anything my ears heard from my teacher, of study; nor would I ever again forget anything of the paths of Torah in which I engaged for their truth.	C. And when I heard this great mystery, my eyes were enlightened and all that I heard—whether it be scriptures, Mishnah, or anything—I would not forget any more. The world was renewed {for me} in purity, and it was as if I had come into a new world.
D. (§280)	
[testimony by Rabbi Ishmael regarding the value of the praxis]	D. (§310)
	[Rabbi Ishmael instructs the reader on how to use the adjuration]
	III. [Further instructions]
	IV. [Testimony concerning the preceding]
	V. [Further instructions]

At B, both the names of the angel and the framework into which it is placed differ in the two versions. In Version A, these names are listed in the context of the Rabbi Ishmael's descriptive statement that Rabbi Neḥuniah made him swear by the Great Crown. In Version B, different names are listed, and they are cast as an adjuration formula beginning *be-shem,* "in the name of." This formula is a common one for introducing potent magical names in magical incantations.[31] In contrast, the praxis of the Sar-

[30] Another minor variation occurs in §278, where Rabbi Ishmael states that "Torah was not remaining with me" (*'en ha-Torah 'omedet bi*), whereas in §308 he says, "my study was not being sustained in me" (*'en talmudi mitqayyem be-yadi*).

[31] See Swartz, "Scribal Magic," 172–73.

Torah is not mentioned in version B. This may be an indication that the redactor of that version, noticing that the story did not contain the actual incantation it recommends, wished to introduce it at this point, whereby the redactor of version A intended the praxis to follow.

Following C, Rabbi Ishmael's description of his enlightenment, the parallel with version A ends. Whereas Version A concludes with a testimony by Rabbi Ishmael, Version B continues at D with what looks like a brief incantation for Metatron, including two lists of his names (1 and 2). The second list is introduced by the statement that the following names were given to him by the other angels because of their love for him.[32] D concludes with an important biblical passage (3) and a liturgical blessing (4). Exod. 34:6–7, Moses' declaration of God's attributes at Sinai, is employed at particular occasions in the standard Babylonian Jewish liturgy, including the ceremony of taking the Torah scroll from the ark at festivals. This verse would therefore be appropriate for a Sar-Torah ritual. Biblical verses are also used in magical incantations to lend them power and authority. These verses are usually relevant to the purpose of the incantation.[33] The blessing *Ḥakham ha-Razim,* "Sage of mysteries," appears in several Merkavah and Sar-Torah prayers, including *Hekhalot Rabbati* and §512, a ritual for pronouncing the divine name.[34]

The magical names listed in D 1 deserve note. First a series of names is given, explained by a gloss explaining that they are all names of Metatron. Then single components of that name (with slight variations) are then listed and identified with Metatron. The letters MRG of the first name correspond to the first three of MDGWBY'L, and so on. This list includes the name TNRY'L, which also appears in the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* fragment[35] as the name of an archangel, and HWZHYH, which may be related to the name ŠQDḤWZYH, which appears in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and elsewhere as a name of the Sar ha-Panim.[36]

The idea of the multiple names of Metatron is one that is reflected in several Hekhalot texts. Specifically, the tradition of the seventy names of Metatron, which has been analyzed by Joseph Dan, appears in Hekhalot literature and associated texts.[37] This tradition, moreover, is part of a

[32] In *Ma'ayan Hokhmah* (on which see Chapter 7), Metatron, having once been the human Enoch, is not fully accepted by the angels, who object to his special treatment.

[33] On biblical verses in amulet texts see Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 35–38 and 55–56, and Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 104–13.

[34] See Margarete Schlüter, "The Eulogy *Ḥakham ha-Razim ve-'Adon ha-Setarim* in Hekhalot Literature," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987): 95–115 (English section).

[35] G8 in Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente.*

[36] The name appears as ŠQHWZYH in some versions.

[37] Joseph Dan, "The Seventy Names of Metatron," *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies* Division C (1982), 19–23. It is possible that this tradition, which appears in 3 Enoch and the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba, is a Ḥaside Ashkenazic interpolation. Nonetheless, the idea that the archangel has many names is still well attested.

somewhat broader phenomenon, the profusion of names for the archangel. As documented by Gershom Scholem, several characteristics of the archangel are attributed to such figures as Michael and Yahoel as well as Metatron.[38] Thus we should not be surprised to see a series of names in our passage, accompanied by the gloss that they are "all Metatron."[39]

Unit III, the first of three appendixes to II, elaborates on how the previous ritual is to be used. The practice of counting one hundred and eleven times, and no more or less, is known from several Sar-Torah and Hekhalot texts.[40] An Aramaic gloss follows explaining that the previous list of names (that is, D 1 in §310) is to be recited up to the quotation of Exod. 34:6–7. He is then to conclude with the blessing follows in III A 4. This blessing is the second benediction in the statutory *ʿamidah*.[41]

Unit IV is a brief testimony to the advantages of using the praxis. This passage is a stereotyped formula with affinities to several passages in Hekhalot literature and elsewhere. For example, a similar statement appears in the *Shiʿur Qomah* (§940=377) concerning "anyone who knows this mystery."[42] More significant, perhaps, is a statement in the Babylonian Talmud. In its discussion of the conditions under which the name of God (*shem ha-meforash*) can be taught, b. Qid. 71a enumerates the blessings that knowing the forty-two-letter name confers: "And anyone who knows it and is careful with it and guards it in purity is beloved above and esteemed below, and fear of him rests on [fellow] creatures; and he inherits two worlds: this world and the world to come."[43]

The parallel between the talmudic statement and the passages in the Hekhalot texts is striking. However, given the esoteric subject, it is entirely possible that the testimonies we find in Hekhalot literature are not based on the talmudic passage. For example, Rav, the tradent of the talmudic statement, does not figure in Hekhalot literature. Rather, statements in both corpora regarding the advantages of knowing magical secrets may have common roots.

In §311, then, we can recognize a well-attested custom of attributing physical safety, social acceptance, and Divine favor to knowledge of a mag-

[38] Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 43–55.

[39] On the phenomenon of assigning several names to one divine being, see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 175 n. 4.

[40] The number varies between 111, as in *Merkavah Rabbah* §681 and our text, and 112, as in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §205; cf. *Maʿaseh Merkavah* §590, where the angels are said to recite the name of God 111 times.

[41] Note that this blessing, which among other things, declares Israel's faith in redemption, is the occasion for petition of Zerubbabel that prompts the angel to reveal eschatological secrets to him in the Zerubbabel Apocalypse. See Israel Lévi, "L'apocalypse de Zorobabel et le roi de Perse Siroés," REJ 69 (1919): 131 and 144 n. 13.

[42] Cf. §424 in *Hekhalot Zutarti*. On these passages see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 97–99.

[43] See Lawrence A. Schiffman, "A Forty-Two-Letter Divine Name in the Aramaic Magical Bowls," *Bulletin of the Institute for Jewish Studies* 1 (1973): 97–102.

ical practice or name. Often, however, these advantages are not mentioned in the text itself. In our case, the benefits of popularity and protection from witchcraft are not essential to the Sar-Torah practice Rabbi Ishmael cultivates; he is interested in learning Torah. Nonetheless, he—as well as the reader—will profit in unanticipated ways from knowing that practice.[44]

Unit V, like III, provides additional instructions for reciting the Sar-Torah incantation. It is to be repeated and the phrase "Blessed are You, teach me Your statutes," from Ps. 119—appropriate in the context of a prayer for skill in learning—is to be included.

SUMMARY

Version B of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah supplements the basic unit (parallel to version A) with additional testimonies and instructions, and follows with a second story in which the angel descends and instructs Rabbi Ishmael in the proper procedure. The encounter with the angel himself is a significant addition to the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah pattern. The text also contains a detailed ritual of abstentions and ablutions.

Ma'aseh Merkavah *Section II: §§560–70*

Ma'aseh Merkavah is primarily an anthology of prayers. It consists of three narrative sections, one of which concerns Rabbi Akiba's ascent to heaven and two of which concern the encounter with angels. The main Sar-Torah material is found in Section II of that text. This section was translated and analyzed in this writer's study of *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.[45] The principal objectives of that analysis were to determine the nature of the prayers in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and their relationship to their narrative framework. For a detailed account of the redactional history of this section and an analysis of the magical prayers in it, the reader is referred to that study. Here the focus is on the Sar-Torah narrative and the ritual procedure depicted in the narrative. Therefore, the narrative of that text is translated and analyzed below and the findings of the earlier study regarding its relationship to other Sar-Torah texts are summarized and amplified.

TRANSLATION

The following translation is excerpted from *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism*.[46] The numbering of the outline is the one used in that study, by

[44] See also the discussion of this phenomenon in Chapter 7.

[45] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 77–90, 134–43, and 185–88. A translation also appears in Janowitz, *Poetics of Ascent,* 43–51; a German translation appears in Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 3:269–93.

[46] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 235–40. For variants and readings taken into account in this translation see the notes to the translation there.

which the section was divided into units, and those units were subdivided.[47] The prayers and magical names, which were analyzed there in depth, are not translated here in full.

VII.
I. (§560): Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. [When] I was thirteen years old,
1. my mind was occupied every day on which fasting is permitted.
2. When Rabbi Neḥuniah ben Ha-Qannah revealed to me the Prince of the Torah, Suriel, the Prince of the Presence, was revealed {to me}.
B. He said to me:
1. The name of the Prince of the Torah is Yofiel,
2. and every one who seeks him {it has been revealed about him that he} must sit for forty days in fast, eat his bread with salt, and must not eat any kind of defilement; he must perform twenty-four immersions, and not look at any kind of colored garments; his eyes must be cast to the ground.
3. And he must pray with all his strength, direct his heart to his prayer, and seal himself with his own seal, and pronounce twelve utterances.
II. (§§561–62) [two Sar-Torah hymns]
A. [Shorter hymn]
B. And he must pronounce [these] letters[48] so that he will not be harmed: [names]
C. [longer hymn]
D. [Concluding instructions for reciting the previous:]
1. He must raise his eyes to heaven so that he does not die; he must stand and recite a name and give praise so that [the name] be engraved on all his limbs and wisdom and the search for understanding be in his heart; and he should call upon His name, and he should pray in His name. He should make a circle for himself and stand in it,
2. so that the demons will not come and liken him to the angels and kill him.

VIII.
I. (§563): Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. 'RPDS the Angel of the Presence said to me: Anyone who wishes to use this great mystery must pray it with all his strength, so that nothing of it be forgotten; all his limbs are [in danger of] being destroyed.

[47] Ibid., 77–90.
[48] That is, magical names.

B. He must call those three names and I will descend: [names]
II. (§564): Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. I asked Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah: How is the wisdom of the Prince of the Torah [obtained]?
B. He said to me:
1. When you pray, pronounce the three names that the Angels of Glory pronounce: [names]
2. And when you pray, pronounce at the end [of your prayer] the three letters that the Creatures pronounce when they gaze at and see 'RKS YWY God of Israel: [names]
3. And when you say another prayer, pronounce the three letters that the wheels of the Merkavah pronounce when they recite song before the Throne of Glory: [names]
4. This is the acquisition of wisdom; everyone who pronounces them acquires wisdom forever.
C. And can anyone endure it?
1. Moses wrote three letters for Joshua and he drank.
2. If you cannot endure it, engrave them as a mark and do not worry yourself with the words of the "heroes":
3. [names]; for fortification of wisdom and for glorification of understanding.
IX.
I. (§565): Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. I sat twelve days in fasting.
1. When I saw that I could not {endure} I employed the forty-two letter name, and PRQRM, the Angel of the Presence descended in anger.
2. He said to me: "Son of a stinking drop! I will not give it to you until you sit for forty days."
3. Immediately I trembled and pronounced the three letters, and he ascended: [names]
B. Then,
1. I sat for forty days
2. and said three prayers in the morning, three prayers at noon, and three prayers in the evening. And I pronounced twelve utterances at every one.
3. On the last day I prayed three [times] and pronounced twelve utterances,
C. and PDQRM, the Angel of the Presence, descended,
1. and with him angels of mercy,
2. and they caused understanding to {dwell} in the heart of Rabbi Ishmael.

II. Who can stand at his prayer?
A. Who can gaze at PNQRS, the angel of the Presence, once this mystery exists?
B. PRQRS YWY God of Israel said to me: "Go down and see; if another man like you did not descend with the permission of PNKRS YWY God of Israel, he killed him."
III. (§566): Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. I sealed myself with seven seals when PRQRS, the Angel of the Presence, descended:
1–3. (§§567–68) [prayers and names]
B. Then I pronounced three names so that angels and demons would not touch me: [names]
C. Great Seal.[49]
X.
I. (§569):
A. Rabbi Ishmael said:
1. Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah said to me: Whoever wants to use this great mystery must pronounce [the names of] the angels that stand behind the Holy Creatures: [names] and say a prayer so that they do not destroy him; for they are the fiercest of all the heavenly hosts.
B. And what is the prayer? [prayer]
II. (§570): I said again to Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah:
A. When [one] recites twelve things, how can one gaze at the radiance of the Shekhinah?
B. He said to me: He says a prayer with all his strength and he is beloved of the Shekhinah.[50]

ANALYSIS

The narrative of this section can be summarized as follows: In Unit VII (§§560–62), Rabbi Ishmael asks Rabbi Neḥuniah about the Sar-Torah procedure. Suriel, the Angel of the Presence, then reveals to him information about cultivating the Sar-Torah. In Unit VIII (§§563–64), Rabbi Ishmael receives further instructions from the Angel of the Presence and from Rabbi Neḥuniah. Rabbi Ishmael cannot endure the forty days of fast required (Unit IX, §§565–68), so he conjures the Angel of the Presence by means of the forty-two-letter name, only to be rebuked by him. Only when he recites the "twelve utterances" does the angel grant him wisdom.

[49] This is a label referring to the previous name as the Great Seal.

[50] MS. MY 8128 adds: *wnwtn lw rŝwt lṣpwt w'ynw nyzwq*, "and He gives him permission to gaze and he is not harmed."

In Unit X, (§§569–70), Rabbi Neḥuniah gives Rabbi Ishmael further instructions for protecting himself from the fierce angels and for gazing at the Shekhinah. This passage, however, does not refer to an ascent.

Section II of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* like the other Sar-Torah texts we have seen, concerns the procedure for bringing angels of wisdom down to earth. This section is composed of several sources, and its narrative progression is not consistently maintained.[51] These sources are indicated by the various names for the Angel of the Presence in the different units of the text. Moreover, the text is interspersed with extensive magical prayers and names.

The narrative of this section follows the pattern of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah complex, particularly the second Rabbi Neḥuniah story in Version B (§§313–14). Unit VII, in which the young Rabbi Ishmael asks Rabbi Neḥuniah's advice, corresponds to the opening of §313; the angel's angry descent in Unit IX echoes Yofiel's rebuke there as well.[52] The redactor of this section of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* was probably familiar with this narrative pattern, either from literary sources or stories he had heard. It is less likely that he had a written copy of our Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah before him.[53]

The important difference between the two texts lies in the additional prayers and instructions inserted at various places, particularly at Units VIII and IX. These detailed prayers usually consist of a brief passage of praise, the effective magical name, and a petition for wisdom.[54] This difference marks a contrast in emphasis as well. Whereas the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah texts emphasize the effectiveness of the correct ritual procedure performed by Rabbi Ishmael at Rabbi Neḥuniah's instruction (§314), the purpose of the narrative of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* Section II is to demonstrate the power of the magical prayers.[55] This emphasis corresponds to the nature of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* as a whole. Its overall subject is how prayers imbued with powerful names can effect the vision of the heavens and the acquisition of wisdom.

Unit X (§§569–70) is appended to this story. It concerns a prayer of protection that Rabbi Ishmael is to recite after having performed the Sar-Torah ritual above. It concludes with a brief exchange in which Rabbi Neḥuniah assures him that he will be able to gaze at the Shekhinah and be beloved of it. Although the prayer in §569 is a petition for wisdom, and thus appropriate to the Sar-Torah narrative, the reference to a vision of the

[51] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 77–78, 89–90.

[52] For an illustration of the parallels and variations, see the chart in ibid., 87–89.

[53] Ibid., 89.

[54] On this pattern and its implications, see ibid., 185–88.

[55] See especially §§566–68, the culmination of the story, in which the successful prayers are provided.

Shekhinah in §570 does not address an integral concern of this section. Here, the magician's direct encounter with God seems a by-product of the Sar-Torah practice and not an essential part of it. The same holds true, as we will see, for the Sar-Torah section of *Merkavah Rabbah*.[56]

Ritual figures prominently in this text. The basic preparation ritual described in the text is one of abstention accompanied by magical prayers. In Unit VII, I A, the angel instructs Rabbi Ishmael in this ritual. This fast is interrupted after twelve days (Unit IX, §565), when Rabbi Ishmael tries to circumvent the proper procedure by pronouncing the powerful forty-two-letter name as a kind of shortcut. His illegitimate use of the name incurs the angel's wrath. By means of additional spells (the "twelve utterances") Rabbi Ishmael is able to endure the fast.

The text refers in passing to other ritual actions. Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions to Rabbi Ishmael in §564 are interrupted by a question: Can anyone endure the procedure? As this question and its answer are not attributed specifically to the rabbis, it is unclear whether the question is supposed to be a rhetorical one in the context of Rabbi Neḥuniah's speech, a question asked by Rabbi Ishmael, or, as is likely, part of an anonymous gloss inserted by a redactor. The answer is that one should emulate Moses, who wrote letters for his disciple Joshua, whereupon he drank them. The discipleship of Moses and Joshua, which in this case extends to magical teaching, also echoes that of Rabbi Neḥuniah and Rabbi Ishmael. Moses' ritual act is consistent with well-attested magical practices for wisdom and other benefits. For example, the Aramaic Sar-Torah text in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* consists mainly of instructions for writing magical names on various objects or substances, which are eaten and drunk. This technique is explored in Chapter 2 above.

The redactor of this section, as in other sections of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* is apparently concerned with the danger of the procedure. Repeatedly the text expresses the concern that the practitioner may not be able to endure it. It is evident from the account of Rabbi Ishmael's attempt to circumvent the fast that the narrator considered forty days to be a long duration. But there is also a concern with magical danger.[57] Like many texts in Hekhalot literature, this text describes elaborate actions and spells whose purpose is to allay the wrath of the fierce angels that guard the heavenly secrets. One of these is a ritual of standing in a circle, an apotropaic action known from talmudic and other sources.[58] This section also refers to seals placed on the body to protect the individual from the angels. This detail reflects an ancient practice of placing apotropaic marks on the foreheads or bodies of

[56] See below.

[57] On the implications of the idea of the danger of the magic, see Chapter 7.

[58] See Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 185 n. 15.

the believers so that the destructive beings would pass them by. As Meir Bar-Ilan has shown, this practice extends from biblical times, as attested in Ezek. 9:4, through the literature of early Christianity and early rabbinic Judaism, to Hekhalot literature.[59] This practice is written into the text of one of the magical prayers. In §566 the seven seals with which Rabbi Ishmael sealed himself are enumerated. These are magical names to be placed on separate parts of the body—perhaps by writing them on the flesh:[60]

> 'WRYS SSTYY on my feet;
> 'BG BGG on my heart;[61]
> 'RYM TYP' on my right arm;
> 'WRYS TSY Y'H on my left arm;
> 'BYT TL BG 'R YYW DYW'L on my neck;
> 'WP 'K QYṬR SS 'ḤD YDYD YH, for the protection of my life,
> and above them all,
> 'P PT YHW ḤYW YW ZHW YHW TYTS: a seal above my head.

The prayer culminates in a general seal for protection, and a seal above the head, which assures that the angels looking down will not harm the practitioner. These apotropaic practices, however, are attested primarily in allusions found in the text. Unlike the abstention rituals, they are not set forth as detailed instructions.

Section II of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* also contains the most extensive Sar-Torah prayers in the corpus. An important element of these prayers is the magician's declaration that he will recite the divine name. Unlike the prayers in the ascent texts of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* the prayers in Section 2 were composed for the purposes attributed to them in the narrative: to induce the angels through magical names to obtain wisdom and skill in Torah for the practitioner.[62] These prayers, more than many in Hekhalot literature, emphasize the theme of divine wisdom brought down from heaven to the magician. Two passages (in §562) provide examples:

> You formed Magnificent Ones of wisdom,
> who have permission to bring down the secrets of wisdom by the authority of
> Your name;
> . . . . . .
> I have pronounced the name of ŠQDḤWZYH Your servant
> so that there may be miracles, wonders, many marvels,

[59] Meir Bar-Ilan, *Ḥotmot Magiyyim 'al ha-Guf 'eṣel Yehudim be-Me'ot ha-Rishonot le-Sefirah, Tarbiṣ* 57 (1987): 37–50. See also Elliot Wolfson, "Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine," *JQR* n.s. 78 (1987): 77–112.

[60] See Bar Ilan, "*Ḥotmot Magiyim,*" 43–44.

[61] Reading *lyby* for *lybw.*

[62] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 142–43.

signs and many great and wondrous portents for me,
in the chambers of wisdom and the orders of understanding.

The concluding prayer, in Unit X (§570), is particularly eloquent in its plea for wisdom:

> Let me be safe in all my limbs,
> and may I discourse in the gates of wisdom,
> and may I examine the ways of understanding,
> and may I gaze into the chambers of Torah,
> and may I discourse in the storehouses of blessing,
> and may they be stored for me.
> For wisdom is before You.

Here the apotropaic nature of the prayer and its function in securing wisdom for the petitioner are linked.

SUMMARY

Section 2 of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* attests to several aspects of the Sar-Torah tradition. It follows the narrative structure of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah complex in which Rabbi Ishmael learns, through the tutelage of his master and the angels, the Sar-Torah practice. It includes a detailed ritual procedure and alludes to other ritual practices. It also contains an unusual set of Sar-Torah prayers. The section's composite nature is evidence that the redactor of the text incorporated a variety of Sar-Torah motifs and practices known to him. However, this section also reflects the particular perspective of the authors of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* according to which prayers, combined with powerful divine names, are the primary instruments to affect ascent or aquire wisdom.

Merkavah Rabbah *§§675–87*

A loosely organized assortment of Sar-Torah, Merkavah, and *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions known as *Merkavah Rabbah* contains a Sar-Torah collection beginning at §675. This collection includes a version of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah, supplemented with hymns and additional narrative and ritual instructions. It is difficult to know where this section ends, as the relationship of the last few passages (§§675–87) to what precedes them is uncertain. A recension of the *Shi'ur Qomah* follows at §688.[63]

The following translation is based on MS. Oxf. 1531. Better readings or significant variants from MS. NY 8128 are included in braces.

[63] See Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah,* 17–18. Cohen observes that it is difficult to fix the beginning of that recension.

TRANSLATION

I. (§675) Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. Happy is the man who repeats this mystery[64] every morning.
1. He acquires this world and the world to come and he merits greeting the return of[65] the Shekhinah in the future.
B. Rehearse this with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might,[66] to do {His} will.[67]
1. Guard your lips from all iniquity; separate yourself from all sin and from all guilt and from all iniquity,[68]
2. and I will be with you every hour and every time and every moment, and at every season:
C. May You be sanctified, praised, and exalted forever, YHWH, God of Israel and King of Kings, blessed be He.
1. For upon the high and exalted throne You dwell, in the chambers on high, the exalted Hekhal.
2. For You have revealed the secrets, and the deepest of secrets, and You revealed the mysteries (*setarim*), and the deepest of mysteries.
3. (§676) You revealed [them][69] to Moses, and Moses to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the Pious (*Ḥasidim*), and the Pious to the Fearers of the Name,[70] and the Fearers of the Name to the men of the Great Assembly,
4. and the men of the Great Assembly revealed [them] to all Israel,
5. So that the children of Israel can engage in Torah with them, and increase study[71] with them,
6. and recite before You each and every secret, by itself, and uphold, and contemplate, and conduct themselves, be wise, and become wise, and sing.
7. ḤY, RZY 'WZY RZYM ṢWRY STRYM 'WNTYBR STRYM, Z'PṬRYH, {Angel}[72] of the Presence, HDWRY'L, great over all wisdom, and ŠQDḤWZYH.

[64] Heb. *raz.*

[65] The word *teshuvat,* "return," is lacking in MS. M40.

[66] Cf. Deut. 6:5.

[67] Reading *reṣono* with MS. NY 8128.

[68] A redundancy; the term *'avon* also appears in this sentence above. It may result from confusion with the word *'imkha* which follows.

[69] MS. Oxf. 5131: *gylyth.* The final *heh* is probably a vocalization of the perfect ending, as in the same verb in the previous line.

[70] MS. NY 8128: *yir'e shamayim,* "Fearers of Heaven." MS. M40: *yir'e H.,* apparently taking the word *hashem* in MS. Oxf. 1531 as a circumlocution for the tetragrammaton.

[71] Heb. *talmud.* Cf. §278 above.

[72] So MS. NY 8128. The other two manuscripts read *melekh,* "king," a common confusion; see above, n. 18.

8. Thousands of thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads stand and serve before the Throne of Glory,
9. and recite your name:
W'Y 'KTYR GṢ NWR HGG HGG ṬWW ZG 'YSQRṬYH.
10. Blessed be the praise of Your name,
and the song of Your might;
Your remembrance is forever and ever.
By the praise of Your name the secret of wisdom shall be revealed,
and by the song of your remembrance the mysteries of mysteries and the gates of understanding shall open,
and the creatures of heaven and earth shall acknowledge before You.
11. Blessed are You, YHWH,
the Sage of all mysteries (*Ḥakham ha-razim*)
and Lord of all secrets.

II. [(§§677–79) Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah A = §§278–80]

III. (§680) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. When my ears heard this great mystery, the world was transformed for me for purity, and my heart was such that it was as if I had come into a new world. And each and every day it seemed to me as if I were standing before the Throne of Glory.

IV. (§681) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. Rabbi Akiba said to me "Son of nobles!
1. Go, return to Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah your teacher and ask your teacher so that he will tell and say and specify for you this procedure in detail[73]—how one makes use of it, how one adjures by it—
2. lest you err and make use of it incorrectly, and act inappropriately, and they harm you as was the case with so-and-so (*peloni 'al-moni*), whom they harmed, and their bile dissolved within them, so that it became like water,[74] because they heard it incorrectly and acted improperly.

B. And when I asked this question before Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah my teacher, he said to me:
1. My student! What Rabbi Akiba said to you my mouth will say. If it were not for the covenant which was made for Aaron and the branch from whom you came, they would already have harmed you and obliterated you from the world.

[73] *Hafrashat middah.* The root *prš* here means to state a procedure or name in detail. Cf. the opening of *Hekhalot Rabbati:* "What, in detail, are the songs [*mah hefresh shirot*] a person recites . . . ?"

[74] Reading *šwrh mrwrtn* as in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §104. See Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 4:84. See below.

2. But return and give a reply to its owners:[75] One adjures servants by their king, and one adjures a slave by his master.

C. When I returned and gave the reply to its owner, what did he do? His mouth uttered names and the fingers of his hands counted until he counted one hundred and eleven times.

D. And so, for anyone who uses this praxis—his mouth must utter names and the fingers of his hands must count until he counts one hundred and eleven times. He shall not subtract or add to them, and if he has subtracted or added his blood is on his head.

V. (§682) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. Every disciple of a sage (*talmid ḥakham*) who knows this mystery

1. shall sleep on his bed in the evening, recite the *Shema'* in the morning at the first watch and at nine hours,

2. and at night he shall stand on his bed and wash his hands and feet twice in water and anoint them in oil and wear *tefillin* and stand and pray before his bed.

3. And when he finishes his prayer, he should go back and sit on his bed and recite and detail and adjure and pronounce and command and uphold

a. ŠQDḤWZYH, who is BD YH YH, who is named after Metatron: MRGYWWY'L who is Metatron, TNRY'L, who is Metatron, GP'Y'L, who is Metatron, GZḤY'L, who is Metatron, 'WZYH, who is Metatron, GNWNYH, who is Metatron, SSNGRYH, who is Metatron, SWRY'YH, who is Metatron, ZRZRY'L, who is Metatron, PSQWN, who is Metatron, 'ṬMWN, who is Metatron, SGRWN, who is Metatron, SNGDYH, who is Metatron, Z'PNWDYH, who is Metatron, ZHWBDYH, who is Metatron, Zevudiel, who is Metatron.

b. "And they call one to another and say: holy, holy, holy" (Isa. 6:3).

4. {And he shall issue commands over them.}[76]

B. (§683) Rabbi Ishmael said:

1. With what qualities shall he use this incantation?[77]

2. In awe and fear and purity, with immersions, with integrity, in abstention, in humility, in the fear of sin.

C. (§684) Rabbi Ishmael said:

1. He shall fast continuously for forty days, and he shall eat bread that he makes with his own hands, and drink water that he fills with his hands, and he may not eat meat, nor drink wine, and he shall not

[75] That is, the one who asked the question originally. This translation is uncertain. Schäfer, *Übersetzung*, translates "deinem Meister," reading *lb'ly* for *lb'lyh*, although the term *b'l* is not a common one for one's teacher.

[76] So MS. NY 8128. The other manuscripts only have the word "commands" (*gezerot*).

[77] *Davar.*

taste any kind of vegetable, and if an emission occurs, he must go back to the beginning of the praxis.

VI. (§685) Rabbi Ishmael said: On account of this incantation Rabbi Akiba descended to inquire of the Merkavah and said:

A. If Zevudiel YY, God of Israel, king of kings, blessed be He, wishes, the king who is {extolled}[78] in names, whose names are sweeter than honey and milk, who is named by ten names:

1. 'WZY WZYH HḤL PṢR WŠRD ŠWWRY 'WZYM ZKWKBH 'NN' ḤGYG' 'GD GNYK DḤWP NRDW PDḤWP 'HH 'HY WGY SPSYPR W''YH RWPSRYP LMRG'L, who is Metatron, BQRBW[79] 'Y 'DYH, Holy,
2. and with the love with which they love him on high, and the Princes of the supernal Host call him ZWYTY'L, servant of YY, God of Israel, Blessed be He.
3. YY, God compassionate and Merciful, slow to anger and of great Mercy. (Exod. 34:6)

B. (§686) Rabbi Akiba said:

1. When I went and made this request before the Throne of Glory I saw YY, God of Israel, who was exceedingly happy and stretched forth his hand, and his right hand,[80] and slapped the throne of glory.
2. And he said: Akiba, my son! [By] this throne on which I am seated, the precious vessel that my hand and right hand have fashioned: I am obligated[81] even to a proselyte who has just been converted, whose body is clean of idolatry and bloodshed. I will obligate Metatron My servant to him, to his footsteps, to much study of Torah.
3. When I departed from before the throne of glory to descend with human beings, He said to me: Rabbi Akiba, my son! Go down and bear testimony of this praxis[82] to creatures.
4. Then Rabbi Akiba descended and taught this praxis to creatures.

C. (§687) Rabbi Ishmael said: Any disciple of the sages who would learn this great mystery, let him say:

1. Blessed are You, YY, Sage of mysteries
   King Lord of all deeds and King, Lord of all secrets
2. Rejoice, rejoice, O throne!
   Sing for joy, sing for joy, supernal dwelling!

[78] So MS. NY 8128. This word, *mehullal,* is lacking in the other manuscripts.

[79] Perhaps meaning "within him" or "within it," although what it means in this context is difficult to determine.

[80] Heb. *yadi ve-yad yemini.*

[81] Heb. *nzqq.*

[82] Heb. *middah.*

Exult, precious vessel,
which is made with wondrous marvels.
Be truly glad, King who is upon you,
like the rejoicing of bridegroom and bride in their bridal chamber,
and be magnified among all the seed of Jacob.
As I have come to take refuge under Your wing,
for your speech is with the speech of your King,
and with the speech of your Maker you talk.

3. As it is said: Holy, holy, holy. (Isa. 6:3)

ANALYSIS

This text can be summarized as follows:

I. (§§675–76): A Sar-Torah hymn praising God as the one who handed down secrets to Moses and through him to Israel.
II. (§§677–79): Version A of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah; almost exactly as in §§278–80.
III. (§680): Brief testimony concerning Rabbi Ishmael's enlightenment.
IV-V. (§§681–84): Rabbi Akiba sends Rabbi Ishmael to inquire of Rabbi Neḥuniah concerning the procedure in II; Rabbi Ishmael gives further instructions.
VI. (§§685–87): Account of Rabbi Akiba's vision of the Divine Throne and concluding hymn attributed to Rabbi Ishmael (cf. *Hekhalot Rabbati* §94 and §154).

These six units are separate passages that have been placed together by a redactor. They are not well integrated, but they can be seen as following a sequence. The first serves as an introduction to the Sar-Torah tradition. The second (II) is the central unit, providing the rationale for the text and the ritual to be followed. The third unit (III) attests to the transformative power of the praxis in II. The fourth and fifth units (IV–V) are additional instructions and testimonies that have been attached to the preceding Sar-Torah collection by means of the narrative device of Rabbi Akiba's inquiry. In VI Rabbi Akiba seeks further knowledge of the technique at the Divine throne. His reception at the heavenly court serves to recommend the praxis to the reader, and, as we will see, to link it to the *Shi'ur Qomah* material that follows at §688.

The first unit (I) consists of an introduction (A–B) and the Sar-Torah hymn in C. A tells of the benefits, in this world and the next, of reciting the "mystery." This term, *raz*, may refer to the prayer in C, which is to be included in morning prayers, or to the entire ritual of I and II. B contains instructions and moral prerequisites for reciting the prayer.[83] It also in-

[83] On lists of moral requirements see N. van Uchelen, "Ethical Terminology in Heykhalot-

cludes a promise cast in the first person: "and I will be with you every hour and every time and every moment, and at every season." It is difficult to tell whether God or an angel is supposed to be speaking in this clause.

The hymn in C follows patterns of Hekhalot hymnology found in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and similar texts.[84] It begins at 1 with an opening salutation using second-person *hitpa'el* verbs and continues at 2 with a statement that God reigns on his exalted throne. This poetic clause is similar to passages in the hymns of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* that tell of God's establishment of heaven and earth.[85] At 2–5 the hymn introduces Sar-Torah themes. In the "chain of tradition" in 2–4 the mysteries of Torah are said to be revealed through Moses and the rabbinic succession to all Israel. This passage and the form it represents are discussed in depth in Chapter 7 below. Five is a purpose clause stating that these secrets are to be used so that Israel can "increase study [*talmud*] with them."

At 6, the theme shifts to that of Israel's praise of God, which is declared to be a further purpose of the esoteric teachings. Divine names and phrases describing the heavenly retinue follow in 7–9. These include the word *raz*, "mystery," *setarim*, "secrets," *ḥai*, "living," and obscure combinations of letters resembling magical names that have their origins in Greek.[86] It is difficult to tell whether they are all the names of the angel or mysterious phrases included for effect. ŠQDḤWZYH appears as a name for the Sar ha-Panim in various sources including Section III of *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.

The final couplets in 10 provide a rationale for the prayer: they state that by means of the praise of God's name—that is the hymn itself with the Divine names—one can acquire esoteric wisdom. This idea is similar to the conception of prayer in the narrative of *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, where reciting the hymns in the text are said to effect ascent to heaven.[87] But in the case of *Merkavah Rabbah* the prayer is effective not for ascent but for acquiring the arcana of Torah. The blessing, praising God as the sage of mysteries (*Ḥakham ha-Razim*), reinforces this theme. Thus this hymn, while echoing the mystical prayers in *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, is thoroughly consistent with the themes of Sar-Torah practice.

This hymn is also parallel to the prayer in §544, which opens *Ma'aseh Merkavah*. It has been shown that the hymn in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* is a

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Texts," in *Tradition and Re-interpretation in Jewish Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honour of Jürgen C. H. Lebram*, ed. J. W. van Henten, H. J. de Jonge, P. T. van Rooden, and J. W. Wesselius, (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 250–58.

[84] See Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 172–89.

[85] See ibid., 173–75.

[86] See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 77; and Yoḥanan Levy, *'Olamot Nifgashim* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1969), 259–65.

[87] See Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 23–25.

truncated version of that in *Merkavah Rabbah.*[88] In *Ma'aseh Merkavah*'s version, the praise of God is shortened and the chain of tradition is omitted. The secrets are said to have been made available directly from Moses to all Israel. A redactor of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* added the prayer at §544 to bring Section I, an ascent text, into harmony with the other sections, which concerned the Sar-Torah.

Unit II is practically identical to Version A of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah (§§278–80).[89] For the redactor of this section of *Merkavah Rabbah,* this unit seems to have served as the centerpiece of the text, around which he added the introduction in I and appendices in II. The prayer in I was, in his view, to be recited together with the Sar-Torah ritual prescribed in II. He also saw Rabbi Neḥuniah as providing additional details for that same ritual in III B and Rabbi Ishmael as supplementing those details in IV and V.

Rabbi Ishmael's statement in III testifies to the success of the ritual procedure in II. Both versions of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah contain similar descriptions of Rabbi Ishmael's enlightenment. Here the three versions are compared:

PRNA (§279=MR §678)	PRNB (§309)	MR (§680)
Then immediately my heart was enlightened like the gates of the east, and my eyes gazed into the depths and paths of Torah, and never again did I forget anything my ears heard from my teacher, of study; nor would I ever again forget anything of the paths of Torah in which I engaged for their truth.	And when I heard this great mystery, my eyes were enlightened and all that I heard—whether scriptures, Mishnah, or anything—I would not forget any more. The world was renewed {for me} in purity, and it was as if I had come into a new world.	When my ears heard this great mystery, the world was transformed for me for purity, and my heart was such that it was as if I had come into a new world. And each and every day it seemed to me as if I were standing before the Throne of Glory.

Both versions of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah emphasize the types of Torah study that Rabbi Ishmael now has at his command. Version A emphasizes his ability to retain what he has heard from his teacher and his mastery of advanced study (*talmud*). Version B lists the categories of sacred texts and traditions that he has learned. Both versions also stress that this skill has somehow transformed Rabbi Ishmael into a newly enlightened person. In *Merkavah Rabbah* it is indeed his heart, that is, his intel-

[88] Ibid., 109–10.

[89] The only meaningful variation between these two versions is that these manuscripts have *sha'are ha-mizraḥ,* "gates of the East," for "*sha'are ha-mizbeaḥ* in §280. As noted in n. 3 above, *Merkavah Rabbah*'s reading is preferable.

lect, that is transformed because of the successful Sar-Torah procedure. There, however, Rabbi Ishmael's joy is emphasized over his knowledge of Torah; his bliss is such that it is as if he were standing before the divine throne itself. This added detail may have allowed the redactor of this compilation to introduce the traditions in §685 a little further down, in which Rabbi Akiba descends to inquire of the Merkavah, and finally advances to the vision of God in *Shi'ur Qomah* §688 and following.

The affinity with *Shi'ur Qomah* proceeds in IV, which introduces Rabbi Akiba, one of the tradents of *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions. The narrative depicts an exchange in which a student asks a question of an elder teacher on behalf of another teacher. Rabbi Akiba sends Rabbi Ishmael to get further knowledge about the ritual set out in II from Rabbi Neḥuniah. They must get this information so that they will not suffer the fate of certain anonymous persons (*peloni 'almoni*), whose "bile dissolved within them."

This cryptic passage can be elucidated by comparison with *Hekhalot Rabbati* §104, in which the physical dangers faced by those who are in the presence of angels are described.[90] From this hymn, which enumerates the heavenly voices and their destructive powers, we can see how the process that harmed *peloni 'almoni* might have been seen to operate:

> The fifth voice:
> Anyone who listens to it is immediately spilled [as from] a ladle,
> and he dissolves entirely into blood.
> The sixth voice:
> Anyone who listens to it is immediately seized by a spear[91] to his heart,
> and it makes his heart quake and transforms his viscera,
> and his bile dissolves[92] inside him, turning to water.

The term *deqirah* may be related to the pharmacological term *me deqirah*, literally "spear water," a medical preparation which is said, according to b. Shab. 110a, to "spear the gall." According to Preuss's *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine*,[93] such potions were seen to act by means of affecting the tension between what is "solid" and "loose" in the organs. By this conception, corresponding to the humoral medicine common in Greco-Roman antiquity, liquefying the gall would thus alter the person's equilibrium. Furthermore, an excess of bile in the body could be fatal. In b. 'Abod. Zar. 20b the angel of death is said to stand over the dying person with a sword at the end of which is a drop of bile, which he drops into the person's mouth when he opens it in fright. He then turns green and

[90] See note 74.
[91] Heb. *deqirah*. See below.
[92] Reading *śrḥ* for *śrt* as in the previous sentence.
[93] P. 187.

dies.[94] In *Hekhalot Rabbati,* then, the powerful voice may do its damage by radically altering the visitor's body composition. In our Sar-Torah text, the organs of the anonymous unfortunates were dissolved into poisonous bile.

This reference is reminiscent of stories told in the Talmud, 3 Enoch, and *Hekhalot Zutarti* concerning the heretic Elisha ben Abuya.[95] In the Talmud and 3 Enoch, Elisha mistakes Metatron for a second "power in heaven" and is punished. These stories often function to warn the prospective traveler to heaven to avoid Elisha's fate. In the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* fragments a similar warning is stated explicitly, although neither Elisha ben Abuya nor Metatron is mentioned.[96]

As it turns out, Rabbi Akiba was prudent in asking Rabbi Neḥuniah's advice. Rabbi Neḥuniah declares that it was only Rabbi Ishmael's priestly descent that saved him from oblivion.[97] Rabbi Neḥuniah gives his admonition in the form of an aphorism: "One adjures servants by their king, and one adjures a slave by his master." Its meaning—that one must use the names of God to conjure the angels—is understood by Rabbi Akiba in C to have a specific application to the ritual. He therefore commences to enumerate the one hundred and eleven divine names, as in the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah B (§310). D brings the relevance of Rabbi Akiba's new information to the attention of the reader, who is now warned by Rabbi Ishmael to utter the names no more or less than one hundred and eleven times.[98]

V consists of three separate sets of instructions by Rabbi Ishmael. They are not presented explicitly as having been the result of Rabbi Akiba's inquiry, and they appear to be independent of each other. The statement that they are to be recited "by every student who knows this mystery" probably means that they are additional rituals to be performed in conjunction with the previous procedures. A is a ritual of prayer and anointing. In addition to early recitation of the statutory morning *Shema'*, the practitioner is to recite the names of Metatron at his bed.[99] These names are listed in 2a; they include ŠQDḤWZYH and Zevudiel, which are com-

[94] See Pruess, *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine,* 187–88.

[95] See b. *Ḥag.* 15a, 3 Enoch §20 (856), and *Hekhalot Zutarti* §345 (cf. §672); cf. *Merkavah Rabbah* §597.

[96] On these passages see Alexander, "3 Enoch," 268 n. a.

[97] See Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 542; cf. *Ma'aseh Merkavah* §586.

[98] On this form, by which the applicability of the narrative to the reader is declared, see below on the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text.

[99] It is unclear from the syntax of this passage whether this part of the ritual is to be performed at morning or evening prayers; the use of *tefillin* and the apparent recitation of the *qedushah* (see below) would seem to indicate morning prayers. However, the recitation of the *Shema'* at bedtime is said in b. Ber. 5a to have an apotropaic effect. See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 156 and 298 n. 5 and the sources cited there.

mon names for the *Sar ha-Panim.* At 2b, Isa. 6:3 is quoted, without any direct statement about its relevance. It is probably included here to indicate that the names are to be recited with the liturgical *qedushah.* Set 3 is a fragmentary allusion to *gezerot,* a term for magical commands to the supernatural powers, which, according to MS. NY 8128, the individual is to issue to the angels.[100]

B and C both specify the requirements for reciting the names in A. B lists the moral prerequisites, and C sets forth the proper ritual procedure, which, unlike the ritual in A, is one of abstention.

In VI Rabbi Akiba descends to the Merkavah, presumably for the purpose of inquiring about the praxis that puzzled Rabbi Ishmael and him. However, it is difficult to tell exactly what the author meant Rabbi Akiba's request to be. The syntax of VI A is obscure; it begins with what may be a petition—"if it please Zevudiel, YY . . . " to be followed by a request—or, perhaps, the prodasis of a conditional declarative statement: "If Zevudiel . . . wishes," to be followed by what he would do in that case. But the passage continues with a description of the angel and concludes with Exod. 34:6. At B we find him before the throne of glory, where he is assured by God that He has been waiting for him all along. In C, Rabbi Ishmael introduces an additional hymn to accompany the praxis. The *Shi'ur Qomah* recension follows.

These units bear signs of influence of the *Hekhalot Rabbati* tradition. At VI A Rabbi Ishmael reports that Rabbi Akiba "descended," employing the characteristic term for travel to the Merkavah in *Hekhalot Rabbati.*[101] The hymn in VI C is an excerpt of a *qedushah* hymn found in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §94 and §154. But the presence of these fragments of the *Hekhalot Rabbati* tradition in these units do not indicate that our text originated in that tradition, nor that it is prior to the ascent texts of *Hekhalot Rabbati.* The structure of the prayer in §685 resembles certain prayers in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* Section II in that it consists of a brief passage of praise, a string of divine names, and a closing blessing with liturgical connotations.[102] Individual fragments of hymns from *Hekhalot Rabbati* were also incorporated secondarily into prayers in *Ma'aseh Merkavah.*[103] Our section, therefore, was composed by someone familiar with the *Hekhalot Rabbati* tradition as it had developed, but not by the same circles that produced it. Sar-Torah elements are also used secondarily here. They are limited to the inclusion of names for Metatron in §685 and God's approval of their purpose in §687.

[100] On the verb *gzr,* see Swartz and Schiffman, *Incantation Texts,* 75, and the sources cited there.

[101] On *yrd,* see the studies listed in n. 18 of the introduction above.

[102] See Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 185–88.

[103] Ibid., 192–94.

The author or authors of those units evidently intended the Sar-Torah narrative that began at §307 with Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions to culminate in Rabbi Akiba's ascent, in which he is assured of God's desire for humans to perform the Sar-Torah practices. This allows the redactor of this section to link the Sar-Torah units I–III, which do not involve an ascent and vision of God, with the Merkavah and *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions that follow, in which that vision is the primary concern. Rabbi Akiba's ascent indeed provides validation for the magic of the Sar-Torah. But it does not necessarily follow, as Halperin suggests, that this validation is the foundation for the ascent traditions, or even the major factor in explaining their function.[104] The ascent passage is a late pastiche, secondary both to the Sar-Torah and *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions. It serves primarily to reinforce the legitimacy of the former and introduce the latter.

SUMMARY

This loosely organized collection of Sar-Torah and related traditions contains the principal elements of the Sar-Torah texts we have seen including the narrative of Rabbi Ishmael's instruction, prescriptions for abstention rituals, and names of Metatron. However, *Merkavah Rabbah* emphasizes Rabbi Ishmael's enlightenment and introduces Rabbi Akiba, who is otherwise not a major figure in Sar-Torah narratives.[105] It also contains a significant Sar-Torah prayer. Moreover, in linking the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah story with the vision of God in the *Shi'ur Qomah,* the redactor of *Merkavah Rabbah* has applied the theme of the ascent to the throne and the vision of God to the Sar-Torah literature. Rabbi Akiba's ascent is undertaken in order to clarify a detail in the praxis, and God Himself declares His desire to see Israel become wise by means of it. This redactor has taken two traditions that had flourished before him and brought them together.

THE *HEKHALOT RABBATI* SAR-TORAH TEXT: §§281–306

This Sar-Torah narrative, which is appended to the ascent section of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* differs from other Sar-Torah texts in several ways. Though attributed to Rabbi Ishmael in the name of Rabbi Eliezer the Great, this text begins with a story that takes place not in the time of these early rabbis but at the beginning of the Second Temple period. That story also includes an unusual poetic dialogue between God and Israel. This text thus bears certain similarities to the Hebrew apocalypse *Sefer Zerubbabel,* which seems to have been written in seventh-century Palestine.[106]

[104] See Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 381–83.

[105] For example, Rabbi Akiba does not appear in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* Section 2, although he is prominent in Section 1.

[106] See below. However, the detail in §305 that the magic was successful outside the Land of Israel may indicate a Diaspora provenance, at least for that passage.

As shown in Chapter 3 above, this text exists in two main recensions. At §§295–96, the scribe of MS. B238 has also inserted an unrelated testimony concerning Metatron/Enoch, which also appears in MS. NY 8128 at §§405–6. A version of this text was also available to the Salmon ben Yeruḥim, who included a poetic parody of the story in his *Sefer Milḥamot Adonay.*

The text consists of four main sections. The first, §§281–98, tells the story of the revelation of the Sar-Torah at the Temple site. This consists of a prologue containing the poetic dialogue (I, §§281–94) and the account of God's revelation to the community (II, §§297–98). The second section (III, §§299–303) presents the ritual itself. The third (IV, §§304–5), which appears only in the longer recension, testifies to the benefits of the ritual. The fourth section (V, §306) is a hymn, which concludes the text at §306 in all manuscripts.

This translation is based primarily on MS. B238, supplemented by other readings.[107] The translation of §306 is augmented by the parallel in §153. As MS. B238's addendum at §§295–96 is not part of this text, it is not translated here.

TRANSLATION

I. (§281) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. Thus said Rabbi Akiba to me in the name of Rabbi Eliezer the Great:

1. From the day when the Torah was given to Israel until the Latter House[108] was built the Torah was given but its beauty and preciousness, glory, greatness and adornment, its awe and fearsomeness, wealth, and pride and dignity were not given until the Latter House and the *Shekhinah* did not dwell in it.

B. (§282) Israel stood to pour its tribulations before their Father in heaven, saying:

1. "You have cast many troubles down on us.
Which shall we seize and which shall we abandon?
You have cast upon us great toil and a heavy burden.
You have said to us: 'Build me a House.
And even though you are building, engage in Torah.'"

C. This is His answer to His sons:

1. (§283) "Because you have had a great interruption between the exiles,

[107] Parts of this text were translated in Swartz, "*Hekalot Rabbati* §297–306"; in J. Maier, "'Gesetz' und 'Gnade' im Wandel des Gesetsverständisses der nachtalmudischen Zeit," *Judaica* 25 (1969): 105–9; and in David R. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Ktav, 1978), 1:88–89. Translations of the entire text appear in Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 2:265–82; and, with analysis, in Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 429–37.

[108] That is, the Second Temple. See Hag. 2:9, quoted below.

I would yearn, 'When will I hear the sound of words of Torah from your lips?'

a. For you have not acted properly and I have not acted properly.
You have not acted properly,
for you opposed me and I was angry at you,
and I rose and wreaked destruction and havoc
on my city, on my House, and on my children.
And I have not acted properly,
for I rose against you
and I sealed a decree of judgment upon you.
Truly, it is a punishment[109] that stands forever,
and to eternity it would be a source of contention,
a retribution without measure—
neither (would it last merely) a year, or two or ten or thirty, or, if it endures,[110] a hundred, and then it goes on its way.[111]
Rather, you have rebuked me,
you have done well.
I have taken your rebuke upon myself.

b. (§284) For the sigh of Israel is sweet to me,
and the yearning for Torah[112] has come over me.
Your words of entreaty have reached my ears,[113]
and I accept the speech of your mouths.
Occupy yourselves with my chosen house;
and Torah will not cease from your mouths.

c. (§285) For I am a Master of wonders and Lord of extraordinary deeds.
Mighty deeds break forth before me,
miracles and marvels before my throne.
And who has come before me whom I did not reward?[114]
Who has called upon me whom I did not answer at once?[115]

[109] Heb. *middah,* a word that is used in several different ways in Hekhalot literature, not all of them clear. This translation supposes that the term used as in the rabbinic expression *middah ke-neged middah,* "measure for measure." Cf. Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 2:268: "Strafmaß." Halperin translates the word as "creature."

[110] Lit., "by reason of strength" (*bi-gevurot*). Cf. Ps. 90:10.

[111] These lines are difficult. The meaning suggested here is that the eternal punishment of exile—which does not merely last a while and cease—would be a constant source of strife between Israel and God, and therefore Israel's protest against this eternal retribution is justified. Cf. Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 268.

[112] That is, Israel's yearning.

[113] Heb. *nitḥanenu be-ʿoznai.* So the manuscripts of the shorter recension. The longer recension reads: *noḥin beʿoznai divrekhem,* "your words are pleasing to my ears."

[114] Cf. Job 41:3.

[115] Cf. Cant. 5:6.

State your supplications before me
and tell me profusely the desire of your souls.
(§286) There is nothing lacking in my treasuries and storehouses.
Utter your requests and they will be given to you,
and the desire of your souls will be fulfilled for you at once.
For there is no moment like this moment
and there is no time like this time.
For my soul has tarried until I saw you;
for there is no time like this time,
when your love cleaves to my heart.

d. (§287) I know what you seek,
and my heart has recognized what you desire:
much Torah is what you seek,
and a multitude of study and a great many traditions, and to inquire of the law is what you wish for,
and a multitude of secrets[116] is what you desire,
to increase testimony in mountains upon mountains,
to pile up sagacity in hills upon hills,
to increase study in the courtyards
and dialectic[117] in the streets,
and to multiply *halakhot* like the sand of the sea,
and rabbis like the dust of the earth;
(§288) To establish sessions[118] in the gates of the tents,[119]
to expound in them the forbidden and permitted,
to declare pure in them that which is pure,
and to declare impure in them that which is impure;
to declare (ritually) fit[120] that which is fit,
and to declare unfit that which is unfit,
to recognize in them types of blood,[121]
and to instruct the menstruant in what to do;
to tie crowns on your heads,
and the wreath of royalty on the heads of your children,
to compel kings to bow down to you,

[116] Reading *razy[m]* with MS. Oxf. 1531. MS. B238: *rbnym;* MS. M22: *rybwy.*

[117] Heb. *pilpul.*

[118] Heb. *yeshivot.* On this term see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 431 n. 73.

[119] As Halperin points out (ibid., 435), the use of the term "tents" for rabbinic schools is based on an exegesis of Gen. 25:27 found in several Palestinian Midrashim. The number of sources he cites attests to the expression's currency. The poet, seeking a variety of poetic figures to employ substitutions for familiar words (cf. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 191 and the references cited there), need not have drawn specifically on the targumic tradition.

[120] Heb. *kasher.*

[121] Probably for the purpose of distinguishing between menstrual blood and other types. Cf. m. Nid. 2:6–7.

and to obligate nobles to prostrate before you;
To spread your name on every shore.
and your renown in the ports of the seas.
to enlighten your faces with the radiance of the day,
between your eyes like the planet Venus.
If you merit this seal,
to make use of my crown,
no ignorant person[122] shall ever be found,
and there shall not be a fool or simpleton among you.

e. (§289) You are glad and my servants are sad,
that this mystery, unique among my mysteries, is going forth from my storehouse.
All of your study sessions will be like fatted calves by means of it[123]
without toil or weariness—
Only with this seal, and by remembering the awesome crown.
There will be astonishment at you,
and sickness over you.
Many will die from sighing,
and their souls will expire upon hearing of your glory.
(§290) Riches and wealth will accumulate for you,
the greatest persons in the world will cleave to you.
the family into which you marry
will be surrounded by pedigree and power on all sides
Whoever is blessed by you will be blessed
and whoever is praised by you will be praised.[124]
You will be called 'those who lead many to righteousness,'[125]
they will call you 'those who justify creatures.'
The determining of the month will go forth from you,
and intercalation of the year from the subtlety of your wisdom.
(§291) By your agency presidents will be anointed,
according to you vice-presidents[126] will stand.
You will raise exilarchs to office,
judges of towns on your authority.
A permanent decree[127] will go forth from you,
none will be able to take issue with it.

[122] Heb. *'am ha-'areṣ.*

[123] Referring to the mystery. The word *bo* is lacking in several manuscripts. MS. NY 8128 and a marginal gloss in MS. V228 add *me'atah ve-hal'ah,* "from now on."

[124] Cf. Gen. 12:3 and Num. 22:6.

[125] Dan. 12:3. The previous parallel stich in that verse refers to the "knowledgeable" (*ha-masqilim*).

[126] Heb. *'Avot bet-Din.*

[127] Heb. *Taqqanat 'Olam.*

f. My servants[128] have fought a great war with me."[129]

D. This is the reply of the chief prosecutor of the ministering angels:

1. (§292) "Let this mystery not go out of Your storehouse,
   nor the secret of subtlety from your treasuries.
   Do not make flesh and blood like us,
   do not make them a substitute for us.
   Let them labor in Torah as much as they are laboring,
   and let those generations who follow maintain it[130] with great toil,
   and great suffering.
2. This is Your glory and this is Your beauty,
   that when they forget[131] they go back and organize (their learning),[132]
   they call before you with a whole heart
   and plead with a fervent soul.[133]
3. Let what we have read stay in our hands,
   and may what we have learned remain in our hearts.
   Let our inward parts retain all that our ears have heard,
   let our hearts hold on to all the paths of study that we have heard
   from the mouth of the master,
   and let one respect the other.[134]
4. But if you reveal this mystery to Your children,
   the small will be equal to the great,
   and the fool like the wise."

E. This is the answer to His servants:[135]

1. (§293) "No, my attendants; no my servants!
   Do not importune about this matter.[136]
   This mystery shall go forth from my storehouse,
   and the secret of subtlety from my treasury.
2. To a beloved people I reveal it,
   and to a faithful seed I teach it.
   For them it has been stored away from eternity,

[128] That is, the angels.

[129] In this first-person statement, God seems to be advancing the narrative, even though this story is being told in the third person.

[130] That is, the Torah.

[131] Reading *mškhyn* as in MS. V228 with Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 431.

[132] Heb. *soderin.* Or, perhaps, "rehearse (in order) their studies."

[133] Cf. 1 Chron. 28:9.

[134] That is, let angels and human beings have respect for each other, that they may avoid the consequences spelled out in the following.

[135] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 431, translates, "thus far his servants' speech," taking it to refer to the preceding. Cf., however, the heading at the end of §282 above, which refers to the speech of God that follows.

[136] Heb. *davar,* which can also refer to a magical ritual or incantation.

and since the days of creation it has been made ready for them.
And it had not occurred to me to impart it[137] to any of these generations
from the days of Moses until now.
It was reserved for this generation,
so that they could make use of it to the end of all generations.
For they went out from evil to evil,
and did not know me.[138]
For their minds have been dulled because of the exile,
and the words of Torah have been as hard in their ears as brass and iron.

3. It is fitting for them to make use of it,
to let Torah enter into them like water,
like oil into their bones.
Thus was Israel in my eyes[139] since the day I was angry with them and struck them,
so that the mountains quaked,
and their corpses were like refuse in the streets.[140]
4. (§294) With what shall I appease them
and with what shall I comfort them?
What good, precious property have I in heaven,
that I may take out and give to them, and make them happy with it?
5. I have looked and seen:
I have gold with me;
there is gold in the world.
I have silver with me;
there is silver in the world.
I have precious stones and jewels with me;
there are precious stones and jewels in the world.
I have already placed wheat, barley, honey, and oil in the world.
6. But what does the world lack?
This secret, which is not in the world:
A property of value[141] of which my children can be proud."

II. (§297) Rabbi Ishmael said: Thus said Rabbi Akiba to me in the name of Rabbi Eliezer the Great:

A. Our fathers had not taken it upon themselves to put one stone on

[137] MSS. M22 and B238: *lytnw*, "to give it"; MS V228: *lytnh*.
[138] Jer. 9:2.
[139] Reading *kakh . . . be-ʿenai* with MS. V228.
[140] Cf. Isa. 5:25.
[141] Heb. *middah shel gaʿavah*. Cf. *Hekhalot Rabbati* §102.

top of another in the Temple of YHWH[142] until they compelled and obliged the King of the universe and all His servants to reveal to them the secret of the Torah: how it is performed, how it is expounded, how it is used.

B. At once the Holy Spirit appeared from the third entrance in the House of YHWH

1. —for the *Shekhinah* did not descend and dwell in the Holy of Holies because of the decree.

2. When our fathers saw the Throne of Glory, which was elevated and stood between the entrance hall and the altar—

a. for until then they had not yet constructed a building, but [it appeared] over a place of plans, on which the hall of the Temple and the altar, and the whole Temple were to be completed—

b. (§298) When our fathers saw the Throne of Glory which was elevated inside it, hovering between the hall and the altar, and the King of the universe upon it, they immediately fell to their faces.

C. And at that moment He said:

1. "The Glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former one."[143]

2. For in the first sanctuary I was not bound to my children, except by this voice.

3. O, my sons, if you only would! Why do you prostrate and fall to your faces? Get up and be seated before my Throne, the way you sit in council. Take the crown, accept the seal, and learn the secret of the Torah: how you shall perform it, how you shall expound it, how you shall use it. Raise the paths of your heart; let your hearts look into Torah.

D. At once Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel stood up before Him like an interpreter and elaborated the names of the Prince of the Torah, one by one, with his name, the name of his crown and the name of his seal.

III. (§299) Rabbi Ishmael said: Thus said Rabbi Akiba to me in the name of Rabbi Eliezer the Great:

A. Whoever wishes to bind himself to the Prince of the Torah

1. must wash his garments and cloaks and perform a stringent immersion [rendering him free] from any doubt of nocturnal pollution.

2. He must enter and sit twelve days in a room or attic. He may not come or go.

3. Nor may he eat or drink; but every evening he shall eat clean bread

[142] Cf. Hag. 2:15.
[143] Hag. 2:9.

of his own hands, and drink water, and not taste any kind of vegetable.

B. (§300) Then he shall recite the story of the Prince of the Torah regularly in his prayer three times every day after the Prayer, which he shall recite from beginning to end.

1. And afterwards, he must sit and repeat it for the twelve days of his fast, from morning to evening; he shall not be silent at any time.

C. When he finishes it, he shall stand on his feet.

1. He must adjure the servants and their King twelve times for each Prince.
2. After that, he must adjure them by a seal for each one of them.

D. (§301) And these are their names.

1. He shall say: ŠQDHWZY Y YWY, the Prince; ZHPNWRY'L YWY, the Prince; ZHWBDY'L YWY, the Prince; 'BYD GHWDDY'W YWY, the Prince; NYHPDRYW'YLYY YWY, the Prince; HDRYWN YWY, the Prince; 'ZBWDH'Y YWY, the Prince; ṬṬRWSY'Y YWY, the Prince; 'ŠRWYLY Y YWY, the Prince; SGNSG' YWY, the Prince; PLYṬRYYHW YWY, the Prince; DHYBYRWN YWY, the Prince; and 'DYRYRWN YWY, the Prince.

2. (§302) He must adjure them, these twelve, In the name of Yofiel, who is the glory of the world by the authority of his King, and in the name of Sarviel, who is one of the princes of the Merkavah; and in the name of Shahadriel, beloved Prince; and in the name of Ḥasdiel, who is called to the Divine Power six times every day.
3. Then he shall go back and adjure those last four by the Great Seal and by the Great Oath and by the name Azbogah, which is the Great Seal, and in the name of ṢRTQ, holy name and awesome crown.

E. (§303) At the end of twelve days, he may proceed to any aspect of Torah he wishes: whether to Scriptures or Mishnah, or gazing at the Merkavah.

1. For he goes forth in a pure state, and from great abstinence and affliction.

F. For we have in hand a teaching, a decree of the forbears and a tradition of the ancients, who wrote it down and left it for the generations, so that the humble could make use of it. Whoever is worthy is answered by them.

IV. (§304) Rabbi Ishmael said: Thus said Rabbi Akiba to me in the name of Rabbi Eliezer the Great: Happy is he, the merit of whose fathers is his aid and the just deeds of whose children stand on his behalf. He may make use of the majesty of the crown, and of this

seal; they are obliged to him, and he is exalted by the majesty of the Torah.

V. (§305) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. This incantation was performed by Rabbi Eliezer and he was answered, but he did not believe it.

1. He returned and it was performed by me, and I did not believe it, until I brought a certain fool and he became equal to me [in learning].
2. It was done again by the shepherds, and they became equal to me.
3. They sent Rabbi Akiba out of the land [of Israel], by authority of a court, and he was detained until it was done by the populace, who could not read or recite, and they were made equal to advanced scholars.[144]
4. [Rabbi Akiba] came and supported and agreed to the testimony of the court, saying: "This thing was even done outside of the land, and it was successful."
5. Thus Rabbi Eliezer the Great and the sages said, "perhaps we have the merit of the land of Israel in our favor."
6. They did not believe it until they sent Rabbi Akiba to Babylonia and it was performed and it succeeded.
7. He gave witness, and afterward we heard and rejoiced.

VI. (§306) Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. How shall a man begin before he prays this [ritual of] the Prince of the Torah?

B. When he stands to pray, he should say:

May you be glorified, uplifted and exalted, glorious King,
for you dwell over a throne high and exalted, awesome and fearsome,
in the lofty chambers of the magnificent palace.
The servants of your Throne are awestruck
and the heavens at your footstool tremble,
every day, with the sound of hymn,
and in a melodious roar and a tumultuous song,
as it is written, "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of Hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa 6:3).
And they say:
Who does not exalt you, O King, awesome and feared by all your servants?
In shaking and trembling they serve you;
in agitation and quaking, they are awestruck before you
with corresponding expression, in unison
they exclaim your awesome name in dread and fear.

[144] Heb. *Talmide ḥakhamim.*

None is earlier and none is later—
anyone who delays his voice past another's even a hair's breadth
is immediately cast aside,
and a flame of fire thrusts him away.
As it is written, "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of Hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa 6:3).

ANALYSIS

This complex text includes unusual narrative and poetic elements, an important set of ritual instructions, and echoes of prophetic and apocalyptic motifs. It is made up of compositional units that have been redacted together to form a coherent whole.

Unit I functions as a poetic prologue to II, which presents the story of the revelation of the secret and introduces the ritual procedure in III. As the ostensible purpose of the text is to present this ritual, the composition properly culminates in III. Units IV and V are appendixes: IV testifies to the extraordinary success of the ritual, and in V a hymn to be recited during the procedure is attached.

Unit I concerns God's decision to reveal to Israel the magical secret of learning Torah at a prodigious rate. The introduction (I A) states that although the Torah was given, its full glory was not revealed until the Second Temple. This "glory" is described in the profusion of synonyms characteristic of Hekhalot texts such as *Hekhalot Rabbati:* "its beauty and preciousness, glory, greatness and adornment," and so on. These nouns probably refer to the magical techniques used to learn Torah.[145] This statement, echoed in II by the use of Hag. 2:9, is notable, as is the Second Temple setting, for its implications for sacred history in rabbinic literature. Rabbinic opinion is divided on whether the Second Temple was inferior to the First Temple.[146] The most prominent source on this question is a discussion in b. Yoma 9b–10a, in which it is said that the Shekhinah did not dwell in the Second Temple because it had not been built by the people of Israel themselves.[147] However, there are statements that imply that the Shekhinah did dwell in the latter temple as well; according

[145] Cf. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 170, who takes this phrase to refer to the oral Torah. However, the passages below, in which Israel complains about their labor in Torah and in which Israel is said to yearn for *halakhot* and *talmud,* presuppose that the Oral Torah was already known to them.

[146] For a list of sources on this question see Wertheimer, *Bate Midrashot* 1:112.

[147] The comment is based on an exegesis of Gen. 9:27: even though God "enlarged Japheth" by making the Persians the instigators of the building of the Temple, the Shekhinah only dwells "in the tents of Shem," the sanctuary built by Israel. In the Zohar (*Bereshit* 28a), however, this idea is used to assert the greatness of the Second Temple. There it is stated that the First Temple was built by human beings, but the latter house by God.

to b. Yoma 39a, the western lamp of the menorah was lit miraculously all night during the forty years that Simon the Just served as High Priest.[148] However, it is unusual to ascribe greater sanctity to the Second Temple. Hag. 2:19, which figures in II below, is usually interpreted in a minimal fashion in rabbinic literature—for example, by taking it to mean that the physical dimensions of the Second Temple will be larger than those of the first.[149] In our text, however, the revelation of the magical secrets for the study of Torah adds glory to the Latter House.

The statement in this introduction that the Torah had already been given not only places the episode in historical sequence, but serves the poem that follows, which echoes the motif of the rivalry between the angels and Moses regarding reception of the Torah.[150] In this case no one hero ascends to heaven to receive the "glory" as in the Moses legends. Rather, Israel is to receive the secrets collectively. However, a debate between the angels and Israel (or the angels and God over Israel) does occur in these legends as in this text.

God's decision to impart the secret is initiated by Israel's complaint (I B) of the double burden of building the Temple and studying Torah. God concedes (C) that the punishment of exile has been too severe, and has caused Israel to neglect the study of Torah. In compensation, he will reveal to them the secret, which will not only allow them to study productively but confer fabulous powers and status on them. This decision is opposed by the angels (D), who, like the angels who opposed Moses' reception of the Torah, argue that this precious secret belongs properly with them. In E God refutes their argument and declares that Israel will be rewarded with his precious secret.

In II the scene shifts to earth, specifically to Jerusalem, where the elders are preparing to build the Temple. They compel God to reveal to them "the secret of the Torah." The verb used here, *zqq,* "compel," clearly has a magical connotation. It is often applied to adjurations of the angels, where it means to obligate supernatural beings to do one's will by means of a magical name.[151]

The setting depicted is that described in the book of Haggai.[152] The narrative serves to explain why the elders were reluctant to begin the work of building the Temple, necessitating Haggai's exhortation: They felt they could not do so and engage in the study of Torah at the same time. Al-

[148] That this is a sign of the Shekhinah can be seen from b. Shab. 22b.

[149] See, for example, y. Meg. 1:12 (72d), b. B. Bat. 3a.

[150] On this motif, see Chapter 6.

[151] See Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 101.

[152] This setting is indicated by the use of Hag. 2:15 in the first sentence of the narrative. On the chronological problem involved in setting this scene according to that verse cf. Sifre Num. *Be-ha'alotkha* 64 (ed. Horowitz, p. 61), y. *Rosh Hashanah* 1:1 (56a).

though God speaks directly to the elders in this scene, the medium for the revelation of the magical names themselves is Zerubbabel. The actual names of the Sar-Torah—presumably, those names that Zerubbabel recited—are listed below in III (§301). These are considered to be the efficacious names in this ritual.

Zerubbabel appears in Haggai both as one infused with the Holy Spirit and as a messianic figure. In addition, he is the hero of apocalyptic texts written in Hebrew in Byzantine Palestine. *Sefer Zerubbabel,* which was written in Palestine in the early seventh century C.E., depicts Zerubbabel as the receiver of eschatological secrets concerning the coming wars between the nations.[153] However, this affinity is not clear evidence of Palestinian provenance for this Sar-Torah story. There are no signs of its direct dependence on the *Sefer Zerubbabel* outside of the mere fact that Zerubbabel is used as the prophetic figure. In our text he does act as a conduit for the divine word. However, here the message consists of the names of the Sar-Torah, not the drama of history. Moreover, as Joseph Dan points out, Zerubbabel does not play a major role in the story. He does not represent Israel as a spokesman of God or as a prophet; rather, Israel is collectively the party in the dialogue with God.[154] There is one detail in *Sefer Zerubbabel* that is reminiscent of Hekhalot literature: the angel who reveals the secrets to Zerubbabel is identified as "Michael, who is Metatron."[155] Paradoxically, though, Metatron does not play this role in our Sar-Torah text. The only specific way the Zerubbabel apocalypse intersects with the Sar-Torah tradition is that in the apocalypse, God grants Zerubbabel the vision of the future after the latter has recited the second blessing of the *amidah,* "Blessed are You, YHWH, who revives the dead."[156] This recalls the brief ritual statement in the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah B §310, in which the recitation of the names concludes with that blessing.

The inclusion of Zerubbabel in this Sar-Torah text, then, is not the result of direct literary influence from the Apocalypse of Zerubbabel. Rather, it is appropriate to the historical setting in which Zerubbabel has a

[153] A good introduction to *Sefer Zerubbabel* can be found in Martha Himmelfarb's translation: "Sefer Zerubbabel," in *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature,* ed. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 67–89; see also Joseph Dan, *Ha-Sippur Ha-'Ivri,* 35–46; Robert L. Wilken, "The Restoration of Israel in Biblical Prophecy: Christian and Jewish Responses in the Early Byzantine Period," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity,* ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985). Versions of the text have been published in Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash,* 2:54–57; Lévi, "L'apocalypse de Zorobabel"; and in Yehudah Even Shemuel (Kaufman), *Midreshe Ge'ulah* (Tel Aviv: Mosad Bialik, 1943), 56–92.

[154] Dan, *Three Types,* 26.

[155] Lévi, "L'apocalypse de Zorobabel," 133.

[156] Ibid., 131.

special role among the elders. The same image of Zerubbabel, that of a prophet who was able to receive divine inspiration at the temple site, evidently prompted the authors of both texts to depict him in this way.[157]

Zerubbabel's inspiration and announcement of the names of the angels is similar to Rabbi Ishmael's behavior upon his enlightenment in Section III of *Ma'aseh Merkavah*. In §580, Rabbi Ishmael, in response to Rabbi Neḥuniah's vision, asks of him the names of the Princes of Wisdom. As a result of asking this question, his heart is enlightened. At that point, he relates, "when I stood on my feet and saw my face shining because of my wisdom, I began to elaborate [the name of] every angel in every Hekhal" (§581). Like Zerubbabel, Rabbi Ishmael recites the magical names automatically as a result of his enlightenment. In *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* this revelation comes as a result of the process of dialogue concerning the secrets of heaven that characterizes the narrative structure of that text. In our story, God conveys the proper names to the community through Zerubbabel as a result of Israel's having obligated Him to do so.

In contrast to the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah, the temple setting is essential to this story. God's throne itself descends as a result of Israel's conjuration. A gloss in B 1 refers to God's presence in the temple as the Shekhinah, whose descent is the ideal result of temple worship in Jewish cultic theology. The author uses God's declaration in Haggai 2:9 that the Second Temple would be greater than the first in a novel way: He declares that its added greatness lies in the fact that Israel is able to obligate God by magical means to grant them the secrets of learning.

Both I and II share thematic and narrative concerns. Unit I clearly introduces the revelation of the Sar-Torah ritual in II–III, and II presupposes that Israel is in need of a way to alleviate the difficulty of studying Torah while building the Temple. Yet despite this continuity, there are indications that these two units were not composed together. While I and II follow in sequence according to the narrative, they differ in style and emphasis. The poetic form and vocabulary of I are not characteristic of II. In fact, there are possible contraditions between the two units. Compare the introductions to I and II:

I (§281)

A. 1. From the day when the Torah was given to Israel until the Latter House was built, the Torah was given but its beauty and pre-

[157] Zerubbabel's status as a prophet was probably more influential in this text than his Davidic lineage. There are few places in Hekhalot literature in which kings of Israel or their descendants are recipients of esoteric traditions or travelers to the Merkavah. David is mentioned in a fragmentary line in G22; see Gruenwald, "*Qeta'im Ḥadashim,*" 368. Cf. §347 in *Hekhalot Zutarti,* also a difficult passage.

ciousness . . . were not given until the Latter House and the Shekhinah did not dwell in it.

B. (§282) Israel stood to pour its tribulations before their Father in heaven.

II (§297)

A. Our fathers had not taken it upon themselves to put one stone on top of another in the Temple of YHWH until they compelled and obliged the King of the universe and all His servants to reveal to them the secret of the Torah.

In I, Israel initiates God's decision to reveal the secret by its complaint. They are not aware of a magical technique for learning Torah; they are only aware of the hardship imposed on them because of their duties. In II, they "compel" (*zqq*) God to reveal to them the magic. Moreover, II stands on its own as a narrative. It does not presuppose the introduction in I A, but supplies its own setting. It is likely, then, that these two accounts were separate units that were placed together in sequence.

A detail in II may be evidence of this redactional process. The flow of the introductory narrative is broken at B1 by a gloss:

B. At once the Holy Spirit appeared from the third entrance in the House of YHWH

1. —for the Shekhinah did not descend and dwell in the Holy of Holies because of the decree.

The gloss in 1 refers to God's decree on Israel since the exile. Although this detail is inessential to the narrative in II, it is a major theme of I. This gloss may have been added by a redactor or scribe who wished to bring the two narratives into greater correspondence. A similar gloss appears in the following sentence, in 2 a. This gloss was inserted by a redactor or scribe who needed to explain how the Shekhinah could appear in a particular place if it had not yet been built. This incongruity is explained with recourse to the idea that the plan for the temple had been laid out in the time of Ezekiel.[158]

Unit III presents the ritual itself. The unit begins with the ascription to Rabbi Ishmael in the name of Rabbi Eliezer, but contains no reference to the Temple setting. Rather, the introduction simply lays out the procedure for the benefit of "whoever wishes to bind himself to the Prince of the Torah." This shift from the "historical" narrative to recommendation of the praxis is familiar to us from Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah B. Following the first story of Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions to Rabbi Ishmael, the text

[158] See Schäfer, *Übersetzung*, 2:284 n. 36.

presents the names in this way: "And now, any student whose study is not sustained in him should stand and bless and rise and adjure" (§310). This pattern serves to link the story, which validates the magic and tells its origins, with the ritual to be employed by the reader. However, because in this case the historical setting is not mentioned, there is no indication that this passage was composed together with I and II.

The procedure itself consists of two stages. A 1–3 is a preparatory ritual of ablution, isolation, and diet. This preparation is called a fast (*ta'anit*) in B. In B he is to recite the *midrash* of the Sar-Torah every day of this preparatory period. This probably means that the practitioner is to recite, presumably from memory, the Sar-Torah text itself, including the narrative of the origins of the praxis and the angelic names.[159] One effect of this regimen would probably be to fix the magical names in his memory. It is to be recited after "the prayer," that is, after the statutory *'amidah,* the prayers of petition known as *tefillah.*[160]

In III E (§303) it is claimed that the practitioner, after having completed the ritual successfully, will be able to "proceed to any aspect of Torah he wishes: whether to Scriptures or Mishnah, or gazing at the Merkavah." For Halperin, this is an indication of the close relationship between the Sar-Torah and Merkavah traditions.[161] However, there are indications that this passage represents a late synthesis of the two traditions. This statement resembles several passages scattered through mystical literature, late Midrashim, and other texts regarding the scholastic curriculum.[162] One of the most prominent appears in the midrash to Proverbs (*Midrash Mishle*), chapter 10. This text has been dated to the ninth century.[163] The midrash enumerates the subjects for which each man will be held accountable in the world to come. If he has studied scripture and not Mishnah he is punished.[164] If he knows several orders of Mishnah, God will ask if he had studied all of halakhah. The interrogation progresses, according to the accomplishments of the individual, up a scale of what the author considers progressively higher levels of learning. This scale culminates in the "vision of the Merkavah":

[159] Cf. §485 where the practitioner is instructed to read the text from a book as part of the ritual.

[160] Cf. the inclusion of the second blessing of the *amidah* in Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah B §310.

[161] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 434.

[162] See the sources cited in Burton L. Visotzky, *Midrash Mishle* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1990), 81–82, commentary.

[163] Visotzky, *Midrash Mishle,* 7. For a translation, see Burton L. Visotzky, *The Midrash to Proverbs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 56–58.

[164] This detail—indeed, perhaps the entire passage— may be a polemic against the Karaites, who rejected the "oral Torah" and disdained the anthropomorphism of the *Shi'ur Qomah.* See Visotzky, *Midrash Mishle,* 82.

> If one comes to Him who possesses advanced study [*talmud*], the Holy One, blessed be He says to him: My son, since you have engaged in *talmud*, the visions of the Merkavah—its vision is its grandeur; for there is no fulfillment in the world that I have created greater than when disciples of the sages sit and glimpse, and look, and see and engage in the rehearsal of this great subject of study [*talmud*].

The Midrash goes on to elaborate the details of the mystical curriculum, including the feet of the divine throne, the heavenly bridges, and the *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions concerning the measurements of the body of God.[165]

This is an unusual depiction of a mystical curriculum in the early post-talmudic period. It is relevant to our passage because it derives from a later period in the development of Merkavah mysticism when the vision of the Merkavah was considered by some to be a normative subject.[166] So too, *Merkavah Rabbah* is a composite of the Sar-Torah and ascent traditions. Having inherited both the magical and visionary streams of Hekhalot literature, its redactors included the latter in its endorsement of the former.

[165] For parallels in Hekhalot literature to this passage, see Visotzky, *Midrash to Proverbs,* 139–40.

[166] Even so, this idea was hardly accepted universally. The study of the *Shi'ur Qomah* was not accepted into the medieval curriculum in all cases. For a list of attestations to the reception of the *Shi'ur Qomah* see Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah,* 31–34.

Chapter 5

SAR-TORAH RITUALS AND RELATED TEXTS

THE Sar-Torah narratives we have seen conform to a basic pattern, in which a rabbi or community is redeemed from difficulties in learning by performing the Sar-Torah praxis. The texts presented in this chapter are evidence for the Sar-Torah phenomenon, but present it through a variety of literary forms and themes.

SAR-TORAH RITUAL TEXTS

Several Sar-Torah texts consist of little more than an attribution to a sage and instructions for a Sar-Torah or related ritual. Ritual Sar-Torah texts demonstrate the interplay between the more purely narrative components of the Sar-Torah tradition and the magical aspects. Because many of the mythic elements of the Sar-Torah tradition—the images of the rabbis, the motif of the student who becomes a great scholar through the magic of the angels—are absent, they can show us more plainly the ritual basis on which those narratives rest.

§§571–78: *The Aramaic Sar-Torah Text in* Ma'aseh Merkavah

A set of instructions for a Sar-Torah procedure written in Babylonian Aramaic appears in only one manuscript of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* MS. NY 8128, between Sections II and III of that text. It is not properly part of *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* This text is relevant to this study for its unusual ritual and other details. The text is evidently corrupt in several places and presents some difficulties.[1]

TRANSLATION

I. (§571) Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. This is the praxis[2] of wisdom and understanding; all who practice it become wise and understanding.

[1] An English translation of §571 appears in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptism,* 266–67. For a German translation, see Schäfer, *Übersetzung* 3:293–99.

[2] Aram. *'wbd.*

1. In the name of YH YH YH YHW YHW YH[W] YHY YHY HY HY HY HW HW HW 'HW 'HW 'HW 'H YH 'HYH 'HYH 'HYH, Blessed, Blessed, Blessed, Holy, Holy, Holy, Shaddai, Shaddai, Shaddai, YHWṢ YHWṢ YHWṢ PṢ PṢ PṢ Merciful, Merciful, Merciful, Compassionate, Compassionate, Compassionate,
2. He elaborates His name by those forty-two [letters]—for the one who practices it is wise and filled with wisdom.
3. "This is my name forever, this is my remembrance from generation to generation." (Exod. 3:15)
4. Amen, Amen, Selah.
5. "And when it rested, he would say, 'Return, O Lord, to the myriads of thousands of Israel.'" (Num. 10:36)

B. (§572) Rabbi Ishmael said:

1. The student who wishes to make use of this great mystery must sit in fasting from the new moon of Sivan until *Aṣeret.*
2. He must not eat anything except from the beginning of this period.[3] Then he whispers[4] to the moon or brings wine and bakes a cooked cake[5] with his hands, he goes to the river and immerses.
3. Also, these nine days, morning and early evening, he immerses, and on the last day, when he wants to bake, he should immerse, and after baking he immerses, and when he [eats] it[6] he should immerse, and after eating it there is no need (to immerse). And when he wants to eat it, he should bring a jug of wine [from the mouth of a jar] and count over it nine times and immerse and drink and use a new vessel.[7]
4. And he must not lie down alone, for thus one will not be harmed.

II. (§573) Rabbi Ishmael said to Rabbi Akiba:

A. A fig leaf, and olive leaves and a silver cup and wine and an egg. He said to me: On all of them about which you asked, [they are] for

[3] Aram. *mn r'sh' dpsqt.* This translation is uncertain. Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 3:294, translates, "und esse nichts außer vom Ersten, was man von allem, absontert."

[4] That is, utters an incantation.

[5] Aram. *dwd' rypt',* which might be translated as "pot bread," or "boiled bread." This translation is uncertain. The word *dwd'* probably means some kind of cauldron; see Jastrow, *Dictionary,* 283, and Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 140. Sokoloff, p. 523, translates *rypth* as "coal-baked bread"; cf. Y. N. Epstein, *Perush ha-Ge'onim,* 136. See also b. Hor. 13b, which lists among the substances that restore memory *pt pḥmyn,* "coal-baked bread." See, however, the variants listed in *Diqduqe Soferim ad loc.;* see Martin S. Jaffee, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation. XXVI: Tractate Horayot* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 207.

[6] Aram., *kd bty lh,* which is difficult. Schäfer, *Übersetzung:* "wenn er geschlafen hat."

[7] See Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 295 n. 6.

holiness and purity, [if there is] righteousness and piety in your heart, you will survive by virtue of their power.

B. (§574) Fig leaf.

1. I adjure you, Sandalphon, the angel who ties a crown for his Master,[8] to go up and say to Him: "two angels, Metatron and 'Agamtaya, [may they safeguard][9] wisdom in the heart of N." And may I know and may I be wise and reason and study and not forget and learn and not neglect what comes before me and what comes after me.
2. They may they not be changed:[10]

In the name of PṢ MPṢ MPṢ Ṣ'H ṢY'H ŠQ BQQ 'H YH W'ZMR KGWN HW' GMR KGWN 'KRKYNYH, in the name of 'H W'H B'H YHW YHW YWH Y'H H'Y, from now forever.

3. Immerse in the evening and fast the next day, and write on the fig leaf and eat and drink wine afterwards and cover your arm.

C. (§575) Olive leaf.

1. MSWMSNN BMWSM' KMWQM' 'YN SMN G'H QM' ? 'GYPY'L MSPW YH W'Y Y', these princes who split the firmament and gave the Torah to Moses by the agency of YHW YHW WHH.
2. I adjure you in the name of the great Dwellers[11] to safeguard Torah in my heart.
3. Write [this] on three olive leaves. Erase it in wine and drink. Write the amulet and hang it on the left arm.

D. (§576) Silver cup.

1. Ink [and lead pigment],[12] and 'P??NYM H'H'TYTN and 'ṬWṬW(T),[13]

a. I shall collect and arrange to these orders[14] of Michael, great

[8] See b. Ḥag. 13b.

[9] Reading a verb such as *dnṭrwn* with Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 3:297 n. 3, for the manuscript's *d'ynwn,* "who are," which is difficult. The idea is probably that Sandalphon is to ask God to authorize those angels to grant the practitioner wisdom.

[10] Referring perhaps, to the following magical names, which have no substitute.

[11] Aram. *Darin;* In the liturgical qedushah for the High Holiday musaf service the corresponding heavenly and earthly liturgies are said to be recited by *dare ma'lah 'im dare ma'tah,* "the dwellers above with the dwellers below." See Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., *Maḥazor le-Yamim Nora'im* (Ashkenaz) (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1970) 1:172.

[12] Aram. *w'bryn qntys.* This suggested translation is based on the terms *'br* and *qnqtwm,* mentioned in b. Shab. 104b as types of lead pigment used for writing. See Jastrow, *Dictionary,* 9, s.v. *'avar.*

[13] It is difficult to tell if these words are magical names or further instructions for writing on the cup.

[14] That is, perhaps, "I shall collect and recite (in order) these names of the angelic ranks of Michael and direct them to the angels." This phrase is also difficult. See Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 297 n. 1.

Prince[15] of Israel, that you safeguard me[16] for the study of Torah, in my heart. Amen, Amen, Selah.

2. Write it on the silver cup, erase it in wine and drink, and count twenty-four times [while reciting] "Hear our voice." And when you conclude, say "who hears prayer."[17]

E. (§577) Wine.

1. NBṬ PT' that rests on the heart, and attach a wineskin that rests on the opening of the stomach,[18]

a. and cast into me scriptures, Mishnah and *talmud,* and enlighten my heart with words of Torah; and let me not stumble with my tongue in all I learn. In the name of Yahoel W'L, and in the name of the great God YH YHW YH YH, 'LY, 'L, and in the name of the great God YH YHW YH YH, 'L, God, the elaborated and honored name,

b. Amen, amen, Selah.

2. Say forty-one times over wine from the mouth of a jar on Sabbath evening when you lie down and drink. And the next day sit in fasting.

F. (§578) Egg.

1. L'YGNSM BPSH PR 'NH, who is the great prince of the Torah, who was with Moses at Mt. Sinai, and crowned him with a wreath[19]—all that he learned and all that his ears heard.

a. —So may you crown, and come to me, and remove the stone from my heart, speedily, and do not delay.[20]

b. Amen, Amen, Selah.

G. Write this on a one-day-old egg of a dark spotted hen.[21] Roast that egg, and after you roast it, peel it, and write this word on that egg.[22] Then go back and eat it, and do not drink afterwards. And on that day one should sit fasting, and in a box.[23]

[15] Reading *'ysr'* for *'šrṣw* with Schäfer.

[16] Reading *yty* for *ytyh.*

[17] These phrases refer to the blessings *shema' qolenu* and *shomea' tefillah* in the statutory amidah.

[18] Evidently, this refers to some sort of preparation of a wineskin from animal innards. Cf. Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 298.The next two words, *mlyly mny,* are obscure.

[19] Reading *w'ṭrh klyl byh* for the manuscript's *w'ṭrh kl byh,* which could mean, "and crowned everything in him." Cf. the piyyut *Yismaḥ Moshe* in the Sabbath morning amidah (Baer, *Siddur,* 219): *kelil tif'eret be-ro'sho natata,* "You placed on [Moses'] head a diadem of splendor," referring to Exod. 34:29. On that *piyyuṭ* see Elbogen, *Ta-Tefillah,* 87.

[20] Reading *tt'kb* for *tt'rb* with Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 299 n. 4.

[21] See Jastrow, *Dictionary,* 380, s. v. *zgt'* ("a clucking hen") and 25, s.v. *'wkm',* where b. Giṭ. 67b is cited.

[22] The magical name listed above.

[23] Aram. *wbyn tybh.* This translation is uncertain. Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 300: "und zwar in einem Kasten."

ANALYSIS

This text consists of ritual instructions attributed to Rabbi Ishmael; in §573 Rabbi Ishmael states that he is replying to a question asked by Rabbi Akiba. There is thus no narrative to speak of. The purpose of the ritual, as stated in I A, is to grant "wisdom and understanding." The incantations in II are more specific, asking for skill in studying Scripture, Mishnah, and Talmud.

There are two separate sets of instructions. The first (§§571–72) consists of a brief incantation to be recited with the forty-two-letter divine name (A) followed by a ritual of fasting, special diet, and immersion (B) to accompany that name. The second (§§573–78) lists incantations to be written on five objects or substances. These objects are listed in A; B–F specify the incantations for each of them. Each of these incantation passages (except perhaps §577) is organized in the following way: it begins with a brief instruction for writing the names; the names and incantation, including the petition for wisdom, follow; and it concludes with instructions for eating or drinking the substance with the magical name. G, at the end of §578, is the final stage of the ritual, involving a fast after eating the egg. The goal of the ritual procedure is thus to ingest the magical names, which, thus internalized, will give a person the extraordinary skill he requests in the incantations.

The ritual instructions and incantations signify at several points that they are for the specific purpose of acquiring skill in Torah. The fasting ritual at I B 1 specifies that the student is to fast from the new moon of Sivan to the festival of Shavuot (*ʿAṣeret*), which celebrates the revelation of the Torah at Sinai. The ritual in I B 2–4, however, bears no indication of that event. In II, the incantations to be written on the objects or recited over the wine include explicit petitions for skill in Torah, using language akin to the testimonies in the narrative Sar-Torah texts we have seen. The practitioner is to adjure the angels that he not forget what he has learned, that he retain Scripture, Mishnah, and advanced study (Talmud), and that he be fluent in oral recitation: "Let me not stumble with my tongue in all I learn." Metatron is mentioned in B, Yahoel in E, and the "great Prince of the Torah, who was with Moses at Sinai" in F. In many ways, then, this passage presents a complete Sar-Torah practice.

However, this unit is striking not in its affinity to the themes of the Sar-Torah texts we have studied, but in several dissimilarities. This ritual is quite different from those found in the Chapter of Rabbi Nehuniah complex and *Hekhalot Rabbati* in that it involves specific materials, such as the fig and olive leaves, and because it involves the drinking of wine and prohibits sleeping alone. Most of the other rituals in the corpus involve abstinence, including from wine, and some sort of seclusion.

In contrast to these deviations from the pattern of the rituals in the principal Sar-Torah narratives, details of these rituals bear similarities to rituals found in the magical rituals for memory discussed in Chapter 2 above. These rituals too involve writing magical names on substances, dissolving them, and ingesting those substances.[24] As we have seen, the use of eggs also follows patterns of magical divination texts documented by Samuel Daiches.[25]

The language in this text has certain affinities with that of the narrative of *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* For example, §571 mentions "righteousness and piety in your heart," which is also a condition for the ascent in *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* However, there is every reason to conclude that it was a separate passage inserted by the scribe of MS. NY 8128 or its Vorlage. In addition, the Aramaic has strong Babylonian features. These factors would argue for a late, Geonic provenance for the text.

Sar-Torah instructions in Hekhalot Zuṭarti *(§336 and §340)*

In the compilation of Hekhalot traditions known as *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* there appears a brief passage containing an incantation to be used by anyone who falters in his studies. This passage appears in the principal manuscripts of the *Synopse* in §§336–37 and occurs again, with some variations, in MS. NY 8128 at §340. This passage is a prayer for memory similar to the petitions for *petiḥat lev* discussed in Chapter 2 above. It is notable because, unlike most other Sar-Torah narratives, it is presented as having been taught to Moses.

Hekhalot Zuṭarti is a collection of disparate Hekhalot traditions in Aramaic and Hebrew, most having to do with the vision of God and the powers of the supernal letters. The text was published in the *Synopse* and by Rachel Elior.[26] Although Gershom Scholem supposed *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* to be the earliest Hekhalot text,[27] this view has not been substantiated.[28] Furthermore, Peter Schäfer has shown that the text, like others in the corpus, is not a unitary document.[29] Our passage appears near what is considered to be the beginning of the text. The previous passage, §335, advertises the value of the text that is to follow and at the same time warns

[24] There is another example of ingesting names in *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* In Section 2, §564, Rabbi Akiba tells Rabbi Ishmael that in order to protect him during a dangerous conjuration, "Moses wrote three letters [that is, magical names] for Joshua and he drank."

[25] See Daiches, *Oil Magic,* Dan, "*Sare Kos,*" and the discussion in Chapter 2 above.

[26] Schäfer, *Synopse,* §§335–74; Rachel Elior, *Hekhalot Zuṭarti.*

[27] Scholem, *Major Trends,* 45 and note.

[28] See Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction," 9–10.

[29] Schäfer, "Aufbau und redactionelle Identität der Hekhalot Zutrati."

of misusing it.[30] This passage could be taken as the beginning of *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* or, as MS. NY 8128 has it, the conclusion of *Hekhalot Rabbati*.[31]

The passage that follows, §337, is a testimony concerning the magical name "that was revealed to Rabbi Akiba, who would gaze at the work of the Merkavah,[32] when Rabbi Akiba descended, and he taught it to his students." Rabbi Akiba proceeds to instruct them to use the name carefully, in awe and humility, and promises that anyone who uses it properly will be successful and have many children. Neither §335 or §337 mention Sar-Torah concerns. The significance of this omission can be understood by examining MS. TS K21.95B (=G7), a Genizah fragment containing material from *Hekhalot Zuṭarti*. This fragment proceeds directly from the end of §335 (fol. 2a, lines 1–2, where the extant text begins in the fragment) to §337 (lines 3–6). This fact, taken together with the absence of Sar-Torah concerns in those passages and the parallel to §336 in §340, suggests that §336 is an independent set of Sar-Torah instructions placed by a redactor of *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* or a later scribe between the testimonies in §335 and §337.[33]

The second version in §340 precedes a series of Merkavah traditions introduced in §341 as the "book of wisdom and understanding and knowledge . . . of above and below . . . that has given to Moses the son of Amram with the knowledge of YH." The material that follows includes Aramaic Merkavah and name traditions and the story of the four rabbis who entered into *pardes*.

§336· TRANSLATION

The following translation of §336 is based primarily on MS. M22, supplemented chiefly by MS. NY 8128.

I. {Blessed are you, Sage of Mysteries.}[34]

A. (§336) When Moses ascended to God,[35] the Holy One, Blessed be He, taught him:

B. any man whose heart errs[36] should recite over it[37] these names:

[30] Cf. §500 (712), which warns against improper use of the *Shi'ur Qomah* names and traditions that precede it.

[31] At the end of the paragraph that manuscript adds: *Tam ve-nishlam sefer Hekhalot Rabbati*, "ended and complete is the book of *Hekhalot Rabbati*."

[32] Heb. *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.

[33] Cf. also Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 143. It is possible that this passage was interpolated by a Ḥaside Ashkenazic scribe.

[34] This opening blessing occurs only in MS. NY 8128.

[35] MS. Oxf. 1531 adds *la-marom*, "on high."

[36] Heb. *śwgh*. This reading is confirmed by its appearance in MSS. NY 8128 and M22, which generally come from different families. Other MSS: *śwnh*, which would mean, "everyone whose heart would rehearse. . . ."

[37] There is no discernible antecedent for *'alav*, "over it."

1. In the name of B'RY 'BH'Y H'Y MRMR' 'WT SMWSLM 'BRY W'NBYGH,
2. Let there be gathered in my heart all that I hear and learn: Scriptures, and Mishnah, study [*talmud*], *halakhot,* and *aggadot,* and may I not forget, ever—not in this world or the world to come.
3. "Blessed are You, YHWH, teach me Your statutes." (Ps. 119:12, 26, 68)

ANALYSIS

The text begins with the account of its origins at I A; the beginning blessing that appears only in MS. NY 8128 is not integral to the passage. B contains the instructions. The purpose of the praxis is to secure memory for a student who is having difficulty retaining his learning—whose "heart errs."[38]

In A the praxis for reciting the name is described as having been taught to Moses "when he ascended to God." This phrase is taken from Exod. 19:3, in which Moses' approach to Sinai is described in those terms. MS. Oxf. 1531 contains an interesting variation: *Moshe 'alah la-Marom 'el ha-'Elohim,* "Moses ascended *on high,* to God." That is, not only did Moses ascend the mountain, but to God's heavenly abode. This idea forms an important foundation for a set of midrashim depicting Moses' vicissitudes during his heavenly journey to receive the Torah. These midrashim, as we shall see, constitute important evidence for the role of ritual and tradition in the Sar-Torah and related literatures.[39]

The idea that when Moses ascended "to God" he received magical techniques for learning Torah is attested in several sources in Hekhalot texts and other corpora. The Sar-Torah prayer in *Merkavah Rabbah* and its parallel, which opens *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* present the Sar-Torah traditions as having been transmitted from God to Moses, and through him, to Israel. The Aramaic Sar-Torah ritual in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* mentions "the great prince of the Torah, who was with Moses at Mt. Sinai."[40] Another important example is the midrashic introduction to a magical book known as *Shimmushe Torah,* which provides techniques for deriving magical names from the text of the Torah. This tale, which was also published as *Ma'ayan Ḥokhmah,* depicts Moses' struggle in heaven to receive the Torah as well as magical techniques derived from it.[41] It is worth noting that in *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* Moses is not linked with the narrative Sar-Torah tradition as it

[38] Given the Sar-Torah content of this passage, this is the most probable meaning of *śgh* and not a spiritual or visionary one. Cf. Elior, *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* 61.

[39] See Chapter 6.

[40] For a full list of references to Moses in *Sar-Torah* texts see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 425–29. Cf. also the narrative of Moses' ascent in MS. G21 (MS. TS K21.95.A).

[41] This text and its implications for the validation of magical practices are discussed in Chapter 7.

appears in *Hekhalot Rabbati* and the Chapter of Rabbi Nehuniah; rather, Moses' ascent is mentioned briefly to validate the incantation. This idea and its implications are discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

The praxis consists only of recitation of the prayer in 1–3 with the divine names in 2. There is no preparatory ritual or ritual of ingestion such as those that appear in other Sar-Torah and *petiḥat lev* texts. The petition begins with the formula *be-shem,* "in the name of . . . ," which opens magical incantations.[42] The divine name contains elements, such as MRM'WT and SMWSLM, found in Jewish and Hellenistic magic.[43] The petition mentions the major genres of the scholastic curriculum, including halakhic and aggadic traditions. The prayer ends with a blessing from Ps. 119, which also appears in the Chapter of Rabbi Nehuniah B (§312) and in texts for *petiḥat lev.*[44]

§340: TRANSLATION

I. When Moses ascended to God,
A. the Holy One, Blessed be He, taught him
1. concerning any man whose heart errs,
2. that he should recite over it these names:
B. Awesome, YHWH of Hosts, 'H BHH YH BYH YHW'L, YHW'L,
1. you, these holy names,
2. open my heart; Let all that I hear, be they words of Torah, or any other words in the world,
3. be preserved in my heart and not be forgotten by me forever.

Although this version of the passage opens with the same introduction (A) ascribing the instructions to Moses at his ascent, the petition itself (B) is a different one. It contains a different name from that in §336. This detail may be one reason the scribe of MS. NY 8128 included it in the manuscript. This petition also omits the list, typical in Sar-Torah texts, of types of Torah the practitioner wishes to learn. Instead, it mentions, more generally, "words of Torah, or any other words in the world." Unlike the prayer in §336, §340 does not conclude in a liturgical blessing. In addition, the petition contains the formula *petiḥat lev,* "opening the heart," bringing it closer to that genre of magical prayers and incantations.

HEKHALOT ZUṬARTI: CONCLUSIONS

These passages are two similar but distinct petitions for memory and retention, each preceded by an identical introduction attributing it to God's

[42] See Swartz, "Scribal Magic," 172–73.
[43] See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 76 and 134, and Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 143.
[44] See MS. TS K1.117, quoted above in Chapter 2.

instructions to Moses. In this attribution the introduction is similar to passages in Hekhalot and magical literatures.

The Sar-Torah himself—the angel appointed over Torah and wisdom—does not figure in this passage. Rather than a praxis for cultivation of the angel, this passage is a magical prayer for increasing learning capacity. The language of petition is fortified with the magical names. This passage thus has more in common with the verbal formulae accompanying rituals for *petiḥat lev* than with the Sar-Torah narratives. It was placed into the framework of a collection of introductory testimonies at the beginning of *Hekhalot Zuṭarti.*

Sar-Torah Traditions in Genizah Texts

Sar-Torah passages are extant in several fragments from the Cairo Genizah. In most cases the Sar-Torah texts appear with other Hekhalot and magical materials. In at least one case, the fragments known as *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah,* Sar-Torah elements are worked into a more encompassing continuous narrative.

MS. Leningrad Antonin 186 (=G19)

This fragment begins with an otherwise unknown adjuration of Metatron, although it has affinities to several Sar-Torah texts we have seen and is parallel to a passage in the Chapter of Rabbi Nehuniah, §310. It is found on one leaf, which is dated by M. Beit Arie to the end of the eleventh century.[45] The beginning of lines 1–5 are torn off. It is also probable that this text did not begin with this leaf. A magical prayer for an unspecified purpose, identified as the "Seal of Rabbi Ishmael," follows the incantation.[46]

TRANSLATION

I. [. . .] HWW H' WWH Y'H WH HV HYY HW' WH YH Y'HW [. . .

A. Yo]u four letters that were handed down to Moses from the bush

1. [ ] and SRDPY'L who is "I am that I am," 'MTYH'Ḥ [ ] which is "I am that I am," QDWŠYH SRPDH'L SRPNY'L SRGNY'L, who [is "I am that] I am—"

2. it was revealed to Moses from the bush.

[45] Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente* 163.

[46] The "Seal of Rabbi Ishmael" quotes the Aramaic saying from m. Avot 1:13: "for he who does not learn is deserving of death, and whoever uses the Crown passes on" (*wd'štmš btg' ḥlp*). It is possible that this is an indication that the prayer was for the Sar-Torah.

B. ZYṬTYH ŠYPṢM YH, exalted, holy, HWH HHH WW WW WH YN YN YH.

1. He lives forever. This is His name forever, and this is His remembrance from generation to generation.[47]
2. Blessed be the name of His Majesty's glory forever and ever, eternity.

C. NDPT GŠT YBLT, which is "I am that I am," TN DḤ TN DPG GḤ SḤ ḤṬḤ, which is "I am that I am," ḤK MG DPH, which is "I am that I am," TWG DPH, which is "I am [th]at I am," TGṬYT YH, which is "I am that I am," 'W 'H 'H 'W HH 'H,

1. Blessed be the name of His Majesty's glory for ever and ever.

II. How does he make use of this?

A. He goes and sits in a house by himself, and he should be in fasting all day and does not eat bread of a woman and does not look either at a man or a woman.

B. And when he walks in the marketplace he averts his eyes from all creatures and does not look even at a one-day-old child. And he immerses every evening and says that utterance[48] after the evening recitation of the *Shema'* each and every day.

III. How does he adjure?

A. He begins from here:

1. I adjure you Metatron, Prince of the Presence, I pronounce upon you Metatron, Prince of the Presence, I claim[49] upon you Metatron, Angel of the Presence, and I seal upon you, Metatron, Prince of the Presence,
2. in the name of ŠQDḤHWZYY, who is called[50] by seventy names:
3. MRGYWY'L, GYWT'L ṬN'RY'L HWZH YH ŠQDHWZY MṬRWN GNWW YH SSNGY' SSBRY' R. S.[51]
4. God of Hosts, God of Heaven, God of the seas, God of dry land, by ZBWRY'L[52] HWZHYH YH YHW, Holy, QDWŠYH QDWŠYH.

B. Thus far, up to one hundred and eleven times.

1. He may not subtract or add. If he has subtracted or added, his blood is on his head.

[47] Cf. Exod. 3:15.
[48] Heb. *davar.*
[49] Heb. *meqayyem.*
[50] Heb. *mah she-niqra'.*
[51] These two letters seem to be an abbreviation, although it is unclear what it stands for.
[52] Cf. the name Zebudiel, frequent in Sar-Torah texts.

2. How does he count? Ten times on every finger. Then he goes back and counts on his first finger to ten, and once on his second finger and continues[53] with his hand.

C. MRGYWY'L, who is Metatron, GYWTY'L, who is Metatron, ṬN'RY'L, who is Metatron, ŠQDḤWZYY, who is Metatron, HWHYH, who is Metatron, who serves above and below.[54] GNWZYH, who is Metatron, SSNGY', who is Metatron, SBRY', who is Metatron,

D. and with the love with which all the heavenly hosts love him. They call him ZYWT'L

[fol. 1b]

the servant of YHWH, God of Israel, Blessed be He, YHWH, YHWH, [ ] mercy and truth. [Ex. 34:6]. Blessed be the name of His Majesty's glory forever and ever.

E. And the Youth, he calls him [ ], the strong, magnificent, and awesome, [names].

F. This is His name forever, and this is His remembrance from generation to generation.[55]

1. Blessed be the name of His Majesty['s glory forever and ever].

ANALYSIS

The fragment begins (I) with a list of Divine names, including God's declaration at Exod. 3:14, "I am that I am." This phrase, which is quite commonly used as a magical name in incantation texts,[56] is identified in A 1 and C with other divine names. The scriptural context of that verse, in which the name is revealed to Moses at the Burning Bush, is a major theme of this passage. Its premise is that not only did God reveal that phrase and the Tetragrammaton at Horeb, but He revealed the esoteric magical names presented in the text as well. In this, our text resembles the passages from *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* analyzed above. However, this idea is more fully developed in this text, whereas in *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* the notion is introduced in a brief lemma. The identification of Exod. 3:14 with the other divine names is reinforced in B 1 by the quotation of Exod. 3:15, "This is my name forever."

Unit II consists of instructions for reciting the incantation. It is to be accompanied by a regimen of diet and isolation and recited after the daily *Shema'*. Unit III consists of instructions for the adjuration itself. A contains the text of the incantation. It begins (1) with a series of verbs of adjuration common in magical texts,[57] addressed repetitively to Metatron

[53] Heb. *mitqayyem*.

[54] This clause is in Aramaic.

[55] Cf. Exod. 3:15.

[56] See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 91.

[57] See Swartz, "Scribal Magic," 173–74.

and continues (2) by invoking the tradition of the seventy names of Metatron. B is a version of a widely distributed set of instructions for reciting the divine or angelic names 111 times.[58] C continues a tradition of the names of Metatron also found in other Sar-Torah texts. D and E augment the archangel traditions by identifying Metatron with Zebudiel (D) and with the Youth (E). F concludes the passage with a paraphrase of Exod. 3:15, which serves as a testimony to the divine origins of the name, and the recitation of a doxology which is customarily recited after the pronunciation of the Divine name. After this passage, the text continues with another divine name tradition, which it calls "The Seal of Rabbi Ishmael." A magical prayer for an unspecified purpose follows.

Although the text as it appears in this fragment does not appear in the manuscripts in the *Synopse,* it does include several passages known from other Sar-Torah and Hekhalot texts. In particular, the traditions about the names of Metatron and the instructions for counting those names are similar to Version B of the Chapter of Rabbi Nehuniah. The following illustrates these parallels. Here one passage, marked III in §310, has been placed opposite its parallel in G19. This passage has been placed in braces and appears in correct order near the end of the column.

§310	G19
D. And now, any student whose study is not sustained in him should stand and bless and rise and adjure	III. How does he adjure? A. He begins from here:
	1. I adjure you Metatron, Prince of the Presence, I pronounce upon you Metatron, Prince of the Presence, I claim upon you Metatron, Angel of the Presence, and I seal upon you, Metatron, Prince of the Presence,
	2. in the name of ŠQDḤWZYY, who is called by seventy names:
1a. in the name of MDGWBY'L GYWTY'L ZYWT'L ṬNRY'L HWZHYH SYN SGN SWBYR'WHW—they are all Metatron—	3. MRGYWY'L, GYWT'L ṬN'RY'L HWZH YH ŠQDHWZY MṬRVN GNWW YH SSNGY' SSBRY' R. S.
	4. God of Hosts, God of Heaven, God of the seas, God of dry land, by ZBWRY'L HWZHYH YH YHW, Holy, QDWŠYH QDWŠYH.
{[see below:] III. Chapter 2.	

[58] The traditions alternate between 111 and 112. Cf., for example, §205 in *Hekhalot Rabbati,* §590 in *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* and §681 in the Sar ha-Panim incantation.

§310	G19
A. Rabbi Ishmael said: How should someone use this incantation [*davar*]?	
1. His mouth should utter names and his fingers should count one hundred and eleven times. He may not add or subtract, and if he adds to them and is harmed, his blood is on his head.}	B. Thus far, up to one hundred and eleven times. He may not subtract or add. If he has subtracted or added, his blood is on his head.
	C. How does he count? Ten times on every finger. Then he goes back and counts on his first finger to ten, and once on his second finger and continues [*mitqayyem*] with his hand.
b. MRG who is Metatron, GWW, who is Metatron, ṬNRY'L, who is Metatron, HWZHYH, who is Metatron, SYN, who is Metatron, SGN, who is Metatron, SWBYR'YHW, who is Metatron.	IV. MRGYWY'L, who is Metatron, GYVTY'L, who is Metatron, TN'NRY'L, who is Metatron, ŠQDḤWZYY, who is Metatron, HWHYH, who serves above and below. GNWZYH, who is Metatron, SSNGY', who is Metatron, SBRY', who is Metatron,
2. And because of the love by which they love him on high, they say to him, ZYWTY'L, servant, Zevudiel YH Akhatriel YWY God of Israel,	A. and with the love with which all the heavenly hosts love him, They call him ZYWT'L the servant of YHWH, God of Israel, Blessed be He.
3. YWY, YWY, "God compassionate and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness and faithfulness."	[Exod. 34:6]
	V. And the Youth, he calls him [ ], the strong, magnificent, and awesome, [names]
	A. This is His name forever, and this is His remembrance from generation to generation.
4. Blessed be the Sage of mysteries and the Lord of secrets.	Blessed be the name of His Majesty['s glory forever and ever].
III. Chapter 2. Rabbi Ishmael said: How should someone use this incantation? His mouth should utter names. . . . [see above]	
2. And he who adjures must stand and uphold, in the name of Margobiel.	
3. —as in the first chapter, until he comes to "slow to anger and of great mercy."	
4. Blessed be you, YY, who revives the dead.	

The common elements to both passages are: (1) two sets of names of Metatron, (2) the second of which follows the pattern "X who is Metatron"; (3) the passage describing the special name Zevudiel, given to him by the other angels; (4) instructions for reciting the names 111 times. The two passages place the material in the following sequence:

§310	G19
(1) First set of names	(1) First set of names
(2) Second set of names	(4) Instructions
(3) Zevudiel	(2) Second set of names
(4) Instructions	(3) Zevudiel

The Genizah fragment thus places the instructions between the first and second set of names.

Another parallel is the Sar-Torah text in *Merkavah Rabbah*. There we find the tradition of the names identified as Metatron's in §682, the Zevudiel passage in §685, and the instructions for counting the names in §681. The counting instructions appear in the context of the Sar-Torah narrative:

> When I returned and gave the reply to its owner, what did he do? His mouth uttered names and the fingers of his hands counted until he counted 111 times. And so, for anyone who uses this praxis—his mouth must utter names and the fingers of his hands must count until he counts 111 times. He shall not subtract or add to them, and if he has subtracted or added his blood is on his head.

The narrative report of Rabbi Akiba's counting ritual thus becomes an instruction to the reader to do the same.

Despite the close parallels among these texts, it is clear that no direct dependence of one on the others can be shown. Rather, these traditions—the Metatron, Zevudiel, and counting passages—belong to a common stock of Sar-Torah traditions set differently by each redactor. In our Genizah fragment, the purpose of incorporating them is to provide details for the proper adjuration of Metatron.

MS. G19: CONCLUSIONS

As we can see from parallels in theme, wording, and pericopae, this passage is evidence that the texts of the Sar-Torah praxis was not confined to the European manuscript tradition reflected in the *Synopse*. However, there are differences. Neither manuscript tradition is dependent on the other. The adjuration is focused on Metatron exclusively, and the narrative context of Rabbi Ishmael's instructions is lacking.[59]

[59] The lemma of the following tradition as the "seal of Rabbi Ishmael" may be, however, evidence that such narrative traditions were known.

MS. TS K21.95.C (G8) and MS. TS K21.95.G (G22): The "Seal of the Merkavah" Complex

Two Genizah fragments from the same codex contain a set of unusual Hekhalot texts. These fragments were first published by Gruenwald and then by Schäfer.[60] They have been dated to the eleventh century.[61] MS. TS K21.95.C (G8) contains a series of treatises and short passages regarding the ascent to the Merkavah and the Sar-Torah.[62] MS. TS K21.95.G (G22) is a fragment of a collection of angelological and Sar-Torah passages.

MS. G8: THE "SEAL OF THE MERKAVAH" AND ITS SAR-TORAH TEXT

MS. G8 is a fragment containing a unique ascent text entitled *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah,* "the Seal of the Merkavah" and a Sar-Torah text. The text works several elements of the Merkavah tradition into a coherent narrative: instructions for an ascent to the Hekhalot, Sar-Torah and angelological traditions, and glorification of a certain Babylonian sage.[63] Although the ascent passages in MS. G8 follow the general outline of *Hekhalot Rabbati* and may have been inspired by that text, they contain much unusual material.

The scribe of G8 has divided the manuscript into sections, perhaps indicating separate sources: *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah,* "The Seal of the Merkavah" (fol. 2b, line 24); Sar-Torah *dilah,* "its Sar-Torah [text]"(ibid.);[64] and *ʿAd kan Gevurat ʿAnafiel,* "thus far the might of Anafiel" (fol. 2b, line 49). *Sar-Torah dilah* is a brief passage in which Rabbi Ishmael describes the testifies to the effectiveness of a list of angelic names; and *Gevurat Anafiel,* which may be have been considered by the scribe to have been part of the Sar-Torah section, is a description of an archangel roughly parallel to §420 in *Hekhalot Zuṭarti.*[65] In the following, some themes of the ascent section

[60] Gruenwald, *Qeta'im;* Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* 97–111, 183–89. Gruenwald's edition is useful not only for the notes on the text, but for his sound restorations of the lacunae in the text.

[61] See Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* 97.

[62] This fragment includes a narrow leaf (fol. 1 in Schäfer, Geniza-Fragmente) parallel to *Shi'ur Qomah,* especially §§939–40. This fragment will not be analyzed here.

[63] The text uses the term descend (*yrd*) to refer to the entrance to the Merkavah; this, as well as the presence of literary parallels, has led Gruenwald (*Qeta'im*) and others to argue for the text's dependence on *Hekhalot Rabbati.* On these fragments see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 188–90, Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 368–70, Martha Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot Literature,*" *HUCA* 59 (1988): 73–100, and Elliot Wolfson, "*Yeridah.*"

[64] On the meaning of this title see below.

[65] See Gruenwald, *Qeta'im,* 366, and Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* 111. The passage was published and discussed in Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 63.

(*Ḥotam ha-Merkavah*) relevant to this study will be described below, followed by a translation and analysis of the Sar-Torah passage.[66]

"THE SEAL OF THE MERKAVAH" (*ḤOTAM HA-MERKAVAH*)

"The Seal of the Merkavah" is cast as a narrative in which the traveler receives special instructions from the angel Ozhaya. Ozhaya teaches him to avoid the dangers of the journey and in the course of his instructions divulges further angelological and eschatological secrets. These secrets include the revelation of the name of a sage who will appear in the future in the "house of the master" (*bet ha-Rav*) in Babylonia. The bulk of the text concerns the path (*netiv*) that the traveler is to follow and the seal (*ḥotam*) that he is to use. The ascent of the practitioner will result in his enthronement in the divine chamber.[67]

The instructions are not only spoken by the angel for the traveler's understanding, but are written as well. Following the apocalyptic excursus, the angel continues:

> But I have interrupted you, and you were writing. Here is the seal of the descent to the Merkavah for the inhabitants of the world, for you and for anyone who wishes to descend and to gaze at the King and his beauty. Now take this path, and descend, and see, and you will not be harmed. For I have placed it on a scroll for you and seen it. And afterwards you descended and tested, and you were not harmed. For I have placed the paths of the Merkavah for you like light, and the byways of the firmament like the sun.[68]

In a subsequent section, labelled "the nature of the sign of the seventh hekhal," Rabbi Ishmael attests that he has written those instructions: "So I wrote it, concerning the Hekhal and its princes, and its interpretations, those 119—are they not written at the beginning of this book?"[69]

The text and the revelation are designated for "you and for anyone who wishes to descend and glimpse and see the King in His beauty." The revelation of the secrets of ascent, therefore, are available in writing and accessible to those who would undertake the journey. The implications of this dimension of the text's attitude toward revelation and esotericism are discussed in Chapter 7 below.

In the section concerning the seventh Hekhal, Rabbi Ishmael attests to

[66] Citations of this and the following fragment will follow the line numbers of the manuscripts in Schäfer's edition.

[67] On the role of enthronement in this text, see Wolfson, "*Yeridah*," and idem, *Speculum That Shines*, 82–85.

[68] Fol. 2a, lines 24–27.

[69] Fol. 2b, lines 20–21.

the success of the procedure: "Rabbi Ishmael said: This praxis[70] was performed by one student, the least of all of us in the company,[71] and he descended [ ] and he said to me, ascend, and bear witness in the company, for four times it is written that the testimony of the seal of the Merkavah is seen, to descend by it, and to see the King in his beauty. Immediately the world was saved."[72]

It is difficult to tell what the author means by the statement that "the world was saved" (*mi-yad nig'al ha-'olam*). It is doubtful that the phrase refers to messianic redemption of the world or an inner state of salvation. Rather, it may mean that the world (the earth or the divine world) was saved from destruction by proper use of the procedure. In *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* §424 instructs the practitioner on the proper way to recite the foregoing traditions: "If he is reciting it for his fellow,[73] he should pronounce one letter from the beginning and one from the end and not join them together, lest he err and destroy the world of the Holy One, blessed be He."[74] Here improper use of the tradition might cause the destruction of the divine world. The phrase may also refer to the idea that the earth is sustained from one generation to another by virtue of the use of a particular ritual procedure or cosmic event. According to m. Avot 6:6 (*Pereq Qinyan Torah*), anyone who cites a saying in a teacher's name "brings redemption [*ge'ulah*] to the world."[75]

In this testimony the effectiveness of the praxis is proven by its use by the weakest student of the academy. This passage is strongly reminiscent of Sar-Torah narratives we have seen in which the Sar-Torah procedure is tried by a junior colleague, who becomes a great sage.[76] Thus, although the extant portions of this section do not mention the Sar-Torah, they do contain themes that shed light on our Sar-Torah texts.

"SAR-TORAH DILAH"

The Sar-Torah section of MS. G8 begins on fol. 2b, line 24. The work is given the superscription *Sar-Torah dilah.* It is unclear what the word *dilah*

[70] Heb. *davar.*

[71] Heb. *ḥavurah.* Cf. the narrative of the deposition of Rabbi Neḥuniah in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §§224–26, which takes place in the presence of a fellowship (*ḥavurah*) of sages.

[72] Fol. 2b, 21–23.

[73] Heb. *le-ḥavero.* This may refer to cases where a magical practitioner performs a procedure on behalf of a client.

[74] So MS. Oxf. 1531.

[75] See Gruenwald, *Qeta'im,* 364, on this passage and other examples of the phrase "destroying the world," in both rabbinic and Hekhalot texts. My thanks to Professor Elliot Wolfson for his suggestions on this passge.

[76] See especially the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah narrative (§305).

refers to. Gruenwald suggests that it is meant to belong to the preceding passage—that is, "its (=*Ḥotam ha-Merkavah*'s) *Sar-Torah* text."[77] If so, this is an acknowledgment by the scribe or author that it is common to append a Sar-Torah text to an ascent text.

TRANSLATION

I. *Sar-Torah dilah:* Their nam[m]es are fixed[78] and are not written.

A. In the Cilician language:[79] 'BYR GHY[80] [. . .]YRYW'LW 'RDYW'YLW DRKYHY'L YHWH GBW GM HWD HWRGYZYY ZHPYR [ ] R[ ]Y'L 'WGWHYY MHWRGYZYY [ ] ŠMSŠMSYH.

B. These are the twelve names I have, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel, and at once they make him a [ ] for them.

II. Who does not exalt the King,
awesome and feared by all His servants?
In shaking and trembling they serve him;
in agitation [and quaking, they are awestruck] before Him.
With corresponding expression, in unison they exclaim your awesome name
because of dread and fear in which they stand.
None is [earlier and] none is later—
anyone who delays his voice in the name[81] past another's even a hair's breadth
is immediately cast aside,
and a flame of fire thrusts him away.

III. And if any prince is adjured by one of these names, and is not compelled,[82] and does not comply, I, 'BRYGHW [ ] 'BYRGHWDDHRYH, I immediately push him in front of me into a burning fire.

IV. Rabbi Ishmael said:

A. We wrote and fixed and laid it down [ ] to use them, and to make use of these princes and names.

B. Happy is the blameless man who has the power and makes use of this grandeur and greatness and might; for he has made use of the king and his servants and his ministers, and it befits him.

[77] Gruenwald, "*Qeta'im,*" 364.
[78] Heb. *qevu'in.*
[79] That is, in Greek. See Gruenwald, *Qeta'im,* 364.
[80] On this name see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 66–67.
[81] That is, in reciting the name of God.
[82] Heb. *nizqaq.*

V. Rabbi Ishmael said:
A. I bear this testimony for the generations:
1. that when I pronounced the name of this beloved prince, and faithful servant and adjured him, [and] his colleagues the three princes who are written, and the utterance of the princes written in the book of princes, at once I sat and gazed and saw into Midrash, traditions,[83] and halakhic interpretations, and I expounded and elaborated Torah, Prophets, and Writings in a year and a half,
VI. with the speech of the master of extraordinary deeds and the lord of wonders, Ozhaya;
A. MYHGŠGH, the prince, who has authority, and You call him MHGŠGH,[84]
1. and there is no creature among Your servants who can call him by that name, because he is second to the majesty, purity, radiance, majesty of 'WRYH,[85] and he is his servant, and he is appointed over the first gate, the gate of the great Hekhal, in which You are seated and in which Your wonders break forth.
B. And when 'WGYHYW found me he burned off my hands and feet, and I was sitting without hands or feet until PLHWWNY, the Prince, who rules over me showed me,[86] and I escaped[87] from beneath him; and he stands [before] GR'YYL, prince of the soul of the King of kings, *RG'TY*.[88]
C. And as for me, I, 'Y'ṬP, loved him, GLGLWN, faithful attendant, who knows the glory, ṬRPZHYN, my attendant, whose name and mine are one.
D. And he takes a garment[89] and outfits the *Hayyot,* and makes the Cherubim splendid, and he beautifies the Ofanim, and he adorns the *ḥashmal,* and embellishes ṬRPZWHYW, the king, and all the dimensions of His throne, like a bride for her canopy.
VII. Anafiel said: I, Anafiel, am the one who, if anyone pronounces for me one of the names of his four servants and adjures me by it, immediately face neither in front of me, nor behind me, nor to the

[83] Heb. *shemu'ot.*

[84] At this point the text seems to be shifting to the second person and addressing God.

[85] In the parallel in §420 it is clear that this is the divine name Hadariron, found in other Hekhalot and magical texts.

[86] No object of the verb *mar'eh,* "showed," is given. It probably implies that the angel shows him a way out.

[87] Heb. *'azuv.*

[88] This clause is difficult.

[89] Heb. *ḥaluq.* On the concept of the garment of God and its attestation in the parallel in *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* to this passage, see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 56–64.

right or the left, until I strike him immediately[90] and drag him on his face—whether a man or a woman,[91] lad, young man, or a virgin, or a sage or a fool, poor or rich, strong or weak, a head or a captain—immediately I strike him and destroy him, and I give him no reprieve—except for the king, for we do not lift up our hand to royalty, because of the share of honor that He [God] shares with kings of flesh and blood.

VIII. Thus far the "might of Anafiel."

IX. Rabbi Ishmael said: I adjure you QBRQLY'L the Prince—

Analysis. The text begins with a first-person narration by an angel. He begins by describing and listing a series of twelve divine names, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel.[92] Following this list is a hymn (II) describing the angels' awestruck praise of God. This hymn is also found at §306, appended to a Sar-Torah text in *Hekhalot Rabbati,*[93] and appears as well in a collection of ascent hymns in *Hekhalot Rabbati* at §153. This parallel is further indication of the influence of the *Hekhalot Rabbati* tradition on the author. At this point (III), the angelic narrator identifies his role in the adjuration and ascent: he is the one who punishes an angel who dares to disobey the adjurer.[94]

At IV, Rabbi Ishmael is the speaker. He testifies that he and his colleagues wrote down the names of these angels. This passage is additional evidence that the author of these fragments is conscious of the textuality of the angelic and ritual traditions he is imparting. Rabbi Ishmael continues at IV with a testimony to the success of the angelic names in securing skill in learning. In this testimony, as in similar Sar-Torah passages, he enumerates the elements of the rabbinic curriculum that he was able to master in V. These include scriptures and midrashic and oral halakhic traditions.

At VI, the text continues with a description of an angel who is appointed over the gate of the divine throneroom and his encounter with Rabbi Ishmael. This passage, which is also found at *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* §420, would seem to be resuming the archangel's discourse begun at I. How-

[90] Here the text has *wrḥbw,* which is difficult. Since the following word, *wswḥbw,* is similar, it is possible that this word is an error that is corrected in the next word.

[91] This (with its parallel in §420) and the mention of virgins in the next line are rare attestations in Hekhalot literature to the idea that women can encounter these angels.

[92] On this idea, see Gruenwald, *Tiqqunim,* 216.

[93] See Chapter 4 above.

[94] The idea that angels may need to be threatened with punishment for disobedience is reflected in adjuration texts. See, for example, §636 in the *Sar-ha-Panim* incantation in which the adjurer threatens the angel with punishment if he delays; on this idea see the discussion of this text below. Cf. also the hymn in 2 above (parallel to §153) in which angels who do not sing in unison are punished.

ever, as it has apparently been grafted to this text from an outside source, it is not immediately related to the previous. Unit VII is a testimony by Anafiel and is probably the unit designated by the subscription *gevurat 'Anafiel,* "the might of Anafiel," in VIII. There Anafiel warns of the consequences of adjuring him by the wrong names. Anafiel is known elsewhere as a principal gatekeeper[95] and shares several characteristics of archangel figures.[96] This warning is reminiscent of testimonies appended to several texts warning of the dire punishments awaiting anyone who misuses the tradition.[97] The last line of the fragment contains the beginning of the next passage (IX), an adjuration of an angel, the rest of which is not extant.

MS. G8: CONCLUSIONS

This entire fragment (*Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* and its Sar-Torah appendixes) is patterned after the structure and language of *Hekhalot Rabbati.* The author has not simply appropriated passages from that work—indeed, it is difficult to tell whether he had *Hekhalot Rabbati* as we have it before him or in some other form.[98] Nonetheless, the overall structure of this text is strongly reminiscent of that work. It weaves apocalyptic concerns with the descent to the Merkavah as does *Hekhalot Rabbati,* it places major dangers at the sixth and seventh Hekhalot, and it concludes with testimonies regarding the effectiveness of the praxis. It also follows the ascent material with a Sar-Torah text. The author, however, has his own concerns, such as his eschatological interest in the Babylonian leader mentioned in the text and the emphasis that the effective agent of ascent is a single seal written in the beginning of the book.

The author seems to be carrying out literary activity in a tradition in which the *Hekhalot-Rabbati* tradition exists as a composite, which includes hymns,[99] magical seals, the descent to the Merkavah, and the Sar-Torah praxis. Unlike the editors of many of the principal extant Hekhalot texts, our author has woven these elements into a coherent narrative. He even makes an effort to mend the seams in the text by use of dialogue ("for I have interrupted you"). The text thus attests to a stage in the evolution of the Sar-Torah and Merkavah traditions in which various elements are further integrated.

[95] Cf. his role in the ascent narrative of *Hekhalot Rabbati.*

[96] See Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 167–68 and 202–3.

[97] Cf. §424, discussed above and in Chapter 6; and §500 (§854).

[98] See Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction," 13; on the redactional nature of *Hekhalot Rabbati* see Schäfer, "Zur Problem der redaktionellen Identität von *Hekhalot Rabbati.*"

[99] Cf. the text's mention in fol. 2b, line 20, of the "songs and specifications" of the ascent" (*shirav u-ferushav*), echoing the opening of *Hekhalot Rabbati:* "What is the specification of the songs?" (*Mah hefresh shirot*).

MS. G22: A FRAGMENTARY GENIZAH SAR-TORAH TEXT

This fragment belongs to the same codex as MS. G8 and was published by Gruenwald together with it.[100] From the colophon at the end of fol. 1b it is evident that the manuscript concluded there. The left-hand edge of the fragment is broken, thus the ends of the lines are lacking. The text is quite incomplete and, like MS. G8, contains several unusual details and presents serious difficulties. Although the text is too fragmentary to translate and analyze in full here, several significant features will be noted.

The text, like G8, is particularly concerned with a distinct angelology, featuring unusual archangel figures such as Tanrael and Ozhaya.[101] Sar-Torah elements are worked into this general angelology. This text also shows evidence of influence from the *Hekhalot Rabbati* tradition. It contains several hymns found in *Hekhalot Rabbati* and uses some of the same terminology.

At the beginning of the fragment, the text mentions a name forbidden even to King David.[102] The text continues with praise of God and lists of divine names. At line 18, a particular angel is discussed:

18 . . . Rabbi Ishm[ael] said: [. . . there are times when he is called]
19 QRBS'L and there are times when he is called QRBSB'L who is near to SGSG['L]
20 QRBS'L who is SGSG'L, the Prince of Talmud, who casts before ṬWṬRYSY, [ ]
21 the King of the world, who spoke and the world came into being, whose names are more numerous than oth[ers'][103]

Unfortunately, the object of the verb *mashlikh* ("casts") is missing.[104] The designation the Prince of Study (Sar-Talmud) does not appear elsewhere in published Hekhalot texts.

At this point the text inserts hymnic passages parallel to hymns in *Hekhalot Rabbati* and description of the Merkavah. Line 33 is parallel to §94, a well-known hymn in *Hekhalot Rabbati,* in which the throne is ex-

[100] Gruenwald, *Qeta'im,* 368–70; Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* 186–89. The folio and line numbers in this discussion refer to Schäfer's edition; the restorations in the translations of experts are based on those in Gruenwald's edition. Translations are displayed according to the line numbers in Schäfer's edition.

[101] See, for example, fol. 1a, line 29.

[102] According to Gruenwald (*Qeta'im,* 368) this line implies that David was also among the Yorde Merkavah. However, as Schäfer points out (*Geniza-Fragmente,* 188), the passage only says that David was not allowed to recite a particular name.

[103] Gruenwald's reading.

[104] In the Aramaic Sar-Torah text in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (§577) the angels are adjured to "cast into me [*hashlikhu bi*] scriptures, Mishnah and Talmud." However, here the text is speaking of casting something or someone before God.

horted to praise God.[105] The difference between the two, however, is noteworthy. Whereas in *Hekhalot Rabbati* the hymn culminates in the *Qedushah,* the hymn concludes in our fragment with a description of Ozhaya's role in the Sar-Torah praxis:

36 that Ozhaya the Angel[106] of the Presence gives to anyone who adjures by the names [of the angels[107]]
37 ŠQDHWZYY and MRGYW'L and HDRWYLYY, for they are indeed the princes of the Torah.

Ozhaya is also the principal interlocutor and the *Sar-ha-Panim* in the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* text. The other angelic names mentioned here are associated elsewhere in Hekhalot literature with the Sar ha-Panim.[108]

At fol 2b, the text turns more fully to Sar-Torah matters. The first lines apparently describe a revelation from the divine throne to the speaker. A testimony appears at line 7:

7 Rabbi Ishmael said: It came out in the likeness of a hand[109] and gave me at [once[110]]
8 [a se]al and a ring in his right hand and said to me: See, the latter ones, a seal of a ri[ng]
9 the upright ones, for according to them anyone who enters may enter and anyone who goes out may go out, and according to t[hem]
10 [and a]ccording to them anyone who becomes wise may become wise and anyone who becomes enlightened may become enlightened and according to them anyone who is humbled is [humbled, and according to them anyone who]
11 anyone who incr[eases] the paths of Torah,[111] testimony, and acumen, for they are masters of Mishnah, masters of *talmud,* masters of "extension";[112] and they are the very princes of prophecy of my throne of glory.

[105] On this hymn and its affinities to the "song of the kine" attested in rabbinic literature, see Scholem, *Gnosticism,* 24–26.

[106] Reading *Mal'akh* for *Melekh* with Gruenwald. On this error, which is frequent in magical texts, see Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 76–77, and the references cited there.

[107] Gruenwald's restoration.

[108] Cf. ŠQDḤWZYY in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* Section II, and MRGYW'L in *Merkavah Rabbah;* see Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* 188.

[109] Cf. Ezek. 8:3, 10:8.

[110] Suggesting a restoration of *bbt* ['*ḥt*].

[111] Cf. the expression "raise the paths of Torah," in the Sar-Torah text in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §298.

[112] A rabbinic technique of biblical exegesis, by which a conjunction or particle in a verse is taken to indicate inclusion of a certain category.

At line 7 Rabbi Ishmael testifies that he received a seal and a ring from a hand that came out.[113] This may refer to the seal of the Merkavah spoken of in MS. G8. Lines 9–11 speak of powerful figures known as masters of Mishnah, (*ba'ale Mishnah*), masters of Talmud, and so on. These are probably angels who designate who is to receive the powers bestowed on the Sar-Torah practitioners.[114] Not only do they decide who is to enter and exit the divine realm, but who is to be great or humble in learning, and, perhaps, in social position. In enumerating the facets of Torah under their authority, the text lists elements of rabbinic learning, much as the rabbinic curriculum is described in other Sar-Torah testimonies. Included, however, are rabbinical hermeneutical techniques (such as *ribbui,* "extension,") and prophecy. The next several lines are very difficult, but seem to assure the practitioner that he will acquire the capacity to absorb "myriads of teachings [. . .] and gaze at them every day, miraculously,[115] [and] to sustain what you hear from my mouth."[116] At fol. 1b, line 26, instructions appear for the Sar-Torah ritual:

26 . . . And as for anyone who seeks Torah,
27 [ ] let him [wea]r new clothes and be covered in new garments of wool
28 [fast[117] during]the [da]y and eat bread of his own hands in the evening, and let him neither go out that day nor enter.[ ]

Most of the details of this ritual are familiar from other Sar-Torah texts, especially the requirement to eat bread of one's own hands after a day of fasting and the isolation of the practitioner. The requirement to wear new woolen clothes is somewhat different from other rituals, which often require white or colorless garments.[118]

The text concludes at line 29 with the subscription, "[ ] Seven Great and Small Hekhalot." This is evidently the title of the compilation—perhaps, the entire Hekhalot compilation under study here, which included the "Seal of the Merkavah" text. As Gruenwald points out,[119] these titles might correspond to the titles *Hekhalot Rabbati* and *Hekhalot Zuṭarti;* but this text, although it contains a few passages from *Hekhalot Rabbati,* does not consist of those texts as we have them. Rather these are

[113] Perhaps this hand is intended to be identified with the hand of the Hayyot in Ezek. 8:3.

[114] For the term *ba'al* in designating the possessor of a particular function or characteristic cf. *Hekhalot Rabbati* §167.

[115] Heb. *bns.*

[116] Fol. 1b, lines 20–21.

[117] This writer's restoration.

[118] See Chapter 6.

[119] Gruenwald (*Qeta'im,* 372).

names conventionally given to a wide variety of Hekhalot texts and anthologies.[120] A colophon concludes: "For R. Abraham bar [ ]."[121] This was perhaps the client for whom this compilation was made.

Sar-Torah Traditions in Genizah Texts: Conclusions

The Sar-Torah traditions in Genizah texts allow us to see the development of the genre outside of the Hekhalot corpus as transmitted through Ḥaside-Ashkenazic manuscripts. These display several important differences from the texts surveyed in the previous chapter. MS. G19 is an incantation directed at Metatron, and lacks the narrative context of the major Sar-Torah texts in the European manuscripts of Hekhalot literature. MSS. G8 and G22, however, are framed by narrative in a particularly striking way; they seem to reflect a tradition by which secrets of ascent and the Sar-Torah are said to be revealed in an angelic monologue which is then transcribed by the author. The major concerns are angelology and soteriology. Angels and their complex relationships are described in detail here, and, in the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* text, related to an earthly rabbi. Although the Sar-Torah ritual itself is described briefly, it is does not take up the preponderance of the text—even in the Sar-Torah section. It is part of a larger discourse on the angels and the mysteries they can impart. We have seen in the previous chapter that the functions of ascent and Sar-Torah ritual were discrete and were combined when redactors included them together in their compilations. The Genizah fragments may be evidence of a stage in the tradition's development in which they were integrated more thoroughly.

The fragments also provide an interesting clue as to their origin. The mention of the Master in Babylonia (*Rav 'eḥad be-Vavel*) is evidence for a Babylonian provenance of the text. Furthermore, the peculiar nature of the fragments and the commonality of themes and angelic figures throughout are evidence that they were written by an individual or small circle of disciples. It has been argued here that this author or circle knew several aspects of the Hekhalot tradition and that much of that tradition developed in late-talmudic or post-talmudic Babylonia. Therefore, we can place the author or authors of the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* complex in Geonic Babylonia, close to the eleventh-century date at which our manuscript was written down.

These fragments are highly original, and describe figures and concerns

[120] See Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* 189.

[121] Gruenwald reads "Joseph" here. Schäfer, however, does not see this reading as justified.

not found in other Sar-Torah texts. Nonetheless, there are also important continuities. There are many passages shared between the Genizah and European manuscripts; hymns found in *Hekhalot Rabbati* are prominent among these. Furthermore, the structure of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* in its more developed recensions,[122] is echoed in this complex. The ascent culminates in the seventh Hekhal; the angel Anafiel plays an important part in the initiation of the traveler; the human being is seated in the divine throne-room; and the ascent is followed by the imparting of information about the Sar-Torah. It is plausible that the author of these fragments was acquainted with some form of the *Hekhalot Rabbati* tradition and worked its elements into an approach that stressed the angelic revelation of secrets, including those of ascent, eschatology, and the acquisition of Torah.

Sar Ha-Panim Texts

The Sar ha-Panim, the Prince of the Presence, often figures in narrative Sar-Torah texts. In some the Sar ha-Panim instructs Rabbi Ishmael in the proper procedure; in some he is the chief angel. For example, Metatron is designated as the Sar ha-Panim in 3 Enoch. In *Ma'aseh Merkavah* he is apparently the supervisor of "angels of mercy" and reveals the name of the Sar-Torah. In fact, the Sar ha-Panim, unlike the Sar-Torah, is known in sources outside of Hekhalot literature. In the book of Jubilees, an Angel of the Presence acts as the intermediary between Moses and God acting as the agent by whom the history of creation and Israel is written. In the Apocalypse of the Ten Martyrs, which is closely related to Hekhalot literature, Metatron is the Sar ha-Panim, who engages in a dialogue with Rabbi Ishmael.[123]

The passages translated and analyzed below are ritual texts for conjuration of the Sar ha-Panim that do not mention the Sar-Torah. Nonetheless, they are relevant to the Sar-Torah phenomenon. Like the Sar-Torah texts, the Sar ha-Panim texts concern the cultivation of an angel who comes down to earth. In addition, Sar ha-Panim rituals are sometimes performed for the purpose of gaining esoteric wisdom.

§§623–639: The Sar ha-Panim Incantation

The principal ritual Sar ha-Panim text is the Sar ha-Panim incantation found in *Merkavah Rabbah* §§623–39. It appears in four closely related

[122] On these see Peter Schäfer, "*Hekhalot Rabbati.*"

[123] Reeg, *Die Geschichte von den zehn Martyren,* chap. 15. In *Hekhalot Rabbati*'s recension of the apocalypse of the Ten Martyrs at §108, the Sar ha-Panim informs Rabbi Neḥuniah of God's plans.

manuscripts: MSS. NY 8128, Oxf. 1531, M40, and D 436. In the New York and Oxford manuscripts it follows a version of the magical text *Ḥarba' de-Moshe,* the "Sword of Moses" (§§598–622).[124] In the other two manuscripts it follows *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* In an article first published before the *Synopse,* Peter Schäfer edited and translated this text and annotated it in depth.[125] This analysis will therefore focus on several aspects of the text relevant to this study.

The Sar ha-Panim incantation is relevant to this study both for its affinities to the Sar-Torah texts and its differences from them. Like Sar-Torah narratives, this text is attributed to Rabbi Akiba in the name of Rabbi Eliezer the Great.[126] Although, as Schäfer observes,[127] the text does not mention the Torah explicitly, it does list categories of wisdom and claim that the Sar ha-Panim will grant to humanity "the secrets of above and below." The incantation is to be preceded by an unusual ritual, which combines a regimen of abstention with a special immersion. The following translation is based on Schäfer's linear edition of §§623–39, and relies primarily on MS. Oxf. 1531.[128]

TRANSLATION

I. (§623) Rabbi Akiba asked Rabbi Eliezer the Great:

A. How is the Prince of the Presence adjured to descend to earth and to reveal to humanity the secrets of above and below and the profundity[129] of the foundations of below and the enigmas of wisdom and the skills of perspicacity?[130]

1. He said to me: My son, once I brought him down and he tried to destroy the whole world. For he is the most formidable of all the supernal retinue, and he stands perpetually and serves before the King of the universe, in immaculacy, austerity, purity, fear, dread, and honor of his Maker, for the Shekhinah is with him everywhere.

[124] On the *Ḥarba de-Moshe* see Moses Gaster, "The Sword of Moses," in *Texts and Studies* (1928; reprint, New York: Ktav, 1971), 1:288–337.

[125] "Die Beschwörung des śar ha-panim, Edition und Übersetzung," in *Hekhalot-Studien,* 118–153. The article was first published in *FJB* 6 (1978): 107–45. The text also appeared in Mussajoff, *Merkavah Shelemah* (Jerusalem, 1921), 1a–3a, and was published by Moses Gaster, "Sword of Moses," 1:332–36 and 3:91–93 as part of *Ḥarba de-Moshe.*

[126] See Schäfer, "Beschwörung," 118.

[127] Ibid.

[128] This is the first full translation into English of this text to this writer's knowledge. It is translated into German in Schäfer, "Beschwörung," and *Übersetzung,* 4:18–42.

[129] Heb. *meḥqar.* Cf. Ps. 95:4.

[130] Heb. *ta'alumot ḥokhmah ve-'ormat toshiah.* Cf. Job 11:6 and Prov. 8:12.

2. I said to him: Behold, I obligate him seven times by the teaching that you taught me when I obligate him to me to use him for my purposes.[131]

B. He must

1. sit fasting on the day on that he brings him down.
2. He shall wash[132] himself for seven days of seminal emission and immerse himself in a watercourse; and he may not anoint himself.
3. And at the end of the days of his purification, on the day of his fast, he shall go down and sit in water up to his neck.

C. And he shall say before he adjures:

1. (§624) I adjure you, princes of dread, fear, and trembling, who are designated to injure anyone who is not clean and pure, and proceed to employ the servants of the Most High.
2. In the honored and awesome name, which is called QTT YH HYH SNN QQ RWTT HW YH SNYQQ RWTT HW YH PPNNH YH WH YH 'GQS YHWH, magnificent over all, and ruling over all, and in whose hands is everything, not to harm me, and not to act toward me with malevolence, and not to frighten me, truly. O Powerful One, revealer of secrets![133]

D. (§625) And afterwards, he shall begin to adjure, for he has been fortified, for he has sealed himself with the forty-two-letter name,[134] which the heavenly hosts will hear and dread and fear and tremble.

1. He shall again adjure them:

a. 'DR GHW HY ZZ PṢṢ YH, the prince who is the most harmful and fiery of all the destructive angels.

b. (§626) In this name and in this wording I call you, 'Ozhaya, Prince of the Presence, Youth, who serves before the King of the Universe, who is Prince and master of all the heavenly hosts.

2. (§627) I adjure you and command you, that you be bound further to my will, and that you accept the adjuration of my command.
3. Do my request and fulfill my petition, and do not intimidate me, nor weaken me, nor make me tremble, nor cause my body to quake. And let my footstep not falter,[135] nor let the speech of my lips be offensive, and let me be strong and of good courage so that

[131] This clause is difficult. With Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* this translation supposes reading *be-horayah,* which is closer to MS. NY 8128's reading, *ke-horayah.*

[132] Heb. *yeqaddesh.*

[133] Suggesting a vocative *gbwrh* for *gbwrt* or *gbwrwt* and reading *gwlh* with MS. Oxf. 1531 and *razim* with NY 8128; see Schafer, Beschwörung, 125 n. 20.

[134] MS. NY 8128 repeats the name here, adding, "may it be glorified over all the letters."

[135] Cf. Ps. 18:37 and 2 Sam. 22:37.

the adjuration prevail,[136] and the name be well ordered in my throat.[137] Do not let perversity seize me, nor let Your servants cause my foot to stray,[138] frightening me, intimidating me and making my hands fall;[139] and I shall not be scoured in fire, flame, whirlwind, and storm[140] that goes with You, wondrous and exalted,

4. the specification of which is this:[141] YW HY GG HW HYH 'TRG HWZ YH MMS YGG HY HY ŠṢMS HY HW.
5. At his wrath the earth quakes; nothing can endure his rage.[142] *Worthy of* blessing and blessed is He.

E. (§628) Again I call upon you, by the fourteen names by which you are revealed to prophets and seers, making words of prophecy sweet and making pleasant utterances pleasing.

1. And this is their specification and substitute:

a. it is *RWḤ PYSQWNYṬ* and its substitute is QSM NGY HW HYH, specified: 'ṬYMWN. Its substitute is ṢṢMS NYHW HY HWH, specified: PYSQWN, specified: HWGRWN, substitute: MṢHWS HYW NH HWH

2. (§629) Behold, I adjure by the fourteen, in which all of the mysteries and secrets and portents are sealed and accomplished, and in which are the foundations of heaven and earth.
3. (§630)[143] Four of them are engraved on the heads of the Hayyot, and they are these: HWGG ṬTY WHW ṢṢ NNY SYH, Master of wonders, ZHW BD HWG QSYSH, Master of miracles, TṢMṢ ŠŠ GHY HH, Master of the extraordinary, QTNT ṢNYH WBR GRDYH, Master of the universe. (§631) And four of them are engraved on the four sides of the Throne, and they are these: NY PRD GHW ZYZ HWH, Holy, Holy Holy; PGG NN 'QMH YH, 'DYR 'DYRY 'DYRWN; SSBR ṬYL 'WZYH, God, God of gods; 'T KN 'TQR PGNYH, King of Kings. (§632) And four of them are engraved on the four crowns of the Ofanim, who stand opposite the Hayyot, as it is said: "When those moved, these moved, and when those stood, these stood" [Ezek. 1:21]. And they are these: BLYṬ GYYH WZYY, ruling over all; 'GSNW ṢB

[136] Heb. *yitgabber.* Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 175, translates, "so that the oath be pronounced properly."

[137] So, ibid.

[138] So MS. Oxf. 1531. Cf. 2 Kings. 21:8.

[139] Jer. 6:24 and elsewhere. See Schafer, "Beschwörung," 126 n. 35.

[140] Cf. Jer. 29:6.

[141] Heb. *she-kakh perusho.*

[142] Cf. Jer. 10:10.

[143] On this passage as exegesis of Ezekiel 1, see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 506.

SS RWR YH, distinguished over all; ZGGHW SS HY ṢṢ HWH, who has command over all; DRHY BYRNNYHW, in whose hand is everything. (§633) And two of them are engraved on the crown of the lofty, high, and exalted King, and they are these: ZTT ṢṢ PP ṢṢ QDDR ḤY TSYH, before whom all knee shall bend and before whom every mouth shall acknowledge; 'ZQH WH GRWZ ŠWY ŠYH, besides whom there is no God or savior.[144]

4. (§634) By them I adjure you and command and ordain you, to hurry and descend to me, I, N son of N[145]—you and not your messenger.
5. And when you descend, do not drive me insane, but reveal to me all the profundities of the mysteries of above and below and the secrets of the hidden places of above and the mysteries of understanding and the skills of perspicacity,[146] like a man who is speaking to his fellow.
6. For by these great, magnificent, wondrous, distinguished,[147] and ordered[148] names I have adjured you, by which the Throne of Glory is founded, and the supernal dwelling, the precious object, which was made by means of wonder and miracle, before your were formed and any heavenly host was forged, before He made the heaven and earth and its environs,[149] and those who dwell on high, and the praiseworthy creatures.

F. (§635) Again[150] I call upon you, by the five bright names among your names, above which there are none, except for one, the specification of which is: SNNQ ṢNYH RTYH 'L YH 'T ṢNYSS ḤW HW HYH, 'L YH BHWRDGHW 'ŠMŠ ŠHYH 'LWH PṬNWQ ṢHW SS'N YH W'HH 'L YH 'ZHNK PṬPṬDY HWH YHWH YH 'L YH.

1. (§636) I adjure you by these five names corresponding to your five names whose letters are written in fire swallowing fire, and hover-

[144] Cf. the latter half of the statutory prayer *'Alenu le-Shabbeaḥ,* which was adapted into *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* See Michael D. Swartz, "*'Alay le-shabbeaḥ:* A Liturgical Prayer in *Ma'aśeh Merkabah,*" *JQR* 77 (1986–87): 179–190.

[145] In MS NY 8128, *Ploni ben Plonit;* that is, the practitioner is to give his mother's name. On this custom with regard to magical and medical formulae see Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 115–16, and Swartz, "Scribal Magic," 177 n. 45.

[146] Cf. the introduction to this ritual above, §623.

[147] Heb. *Bḥwn.* Perhaps meaning that the name was tested and found to be effective. Cf. the phrase *baduq u-menuseh,* "checked and tested," often used for names and incantations.

[148] That is, recited in the proper order.

[149] Cf. Prov. 8:26.

[150] So MS. Oxf. 1531, but lacking in MS. NY 8128. MSS. M40 and D 436 have *ṭwb,* evidently a corruption for MS. Oxf. 1531's reading.

ing above the throne of glory, one going up and one going down, so that the Princes of the Presence will not glimpse them.

2. And this is their specification and engraving[151] and adornment: 'TLMT GNYSS HWH YH YH QRYMWS QRYR HWH YH YH YHB 'HYSWG GHWH YH TTMNGYH YHB HWRGH YH YH HW HH GH YH YH YHB 'QNY'P ṢL ZD ŠQTTH WB ḤYH YHB.
3. By them I adjure you, who know and are familiar with the praiseworthiness and greatness of these names, the great praiseworthiness of one of which no mouth can praise and no ears can hear.
4. You have been commanded and warned by the Most High that if you hear this adjuration with these names, do honor to your name and hurry and descend and do the will of him who adjures you.
5. And if you delay, behold, I shall push you into the river [*rigayon*] of pursuing fire and stand another one in your stead and in place of your authority.[152]
6. Now hurry and descend to me, I, N. son of N., not in anger and not intimidation, and not with [?][153] of fire, not with hailstones, or walls of rage, or storehouses of snow, and not with the beating of the wings of the wind[154] and not with the storm-wind fronts[155] which go with you. I have asked you: Fulfil my request and do my bidding, for everything is in your hands. By the authority of RD HW HYH, my God and Your God, Lord of all and Your Lord.
7. And by his names, I have adjured you to be obliged to me and hurry and descend and do my will and do not delay.

G. (§637) Again I call you in the name, which is the greatest of all your names and beloved and pleasant, in the name of your Master,

1. because one letter is missing from His name and by it he fashioned everything and sealed with it all the work of His hands. And this is [their] specification,[156] its [?],[157] their potency, and their adornment: 'ŠŠ MQṢTT MG MSṢYY MNQYY PYPG HWGYY HSS PṢS YH S'MYNNSYH QTW HWHS. And its specification in pure language is with *yod he.*

[151] Heb. *ve-niqquvan.*

[152] So MS. NY. 8128.

[153] Heb. *brny.* This word is obscure. For the possibilities see Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 36 n. 23.

[154] Heb. *knypwt s'rh;* cf. the expressions *kanfe ruaḥ* (2 Sam. 22:11, Ps. 18:11, 104:3) and *ruaḥ se'arah* (Ezek. 1:4 and elsewhere).

[155] Heb. *gevulot shel sufah.*

[156] Reading *perushan* with MS. M40.

[157] The Hebrew, *'ywrn,* is difficult. Schäfer suggests "blendendes Leuchten."

2. How is he called? YHWH YW HWH HW HW YHWH YH HYH YHWH YHWH YHWH ḤY WHYY HYW HYH YH HHW YW ḤY HWH YH YHWH YWH.
3. (§638) I adjure you by the Holy right hand and by His [steadfast] and beloved name, for whose glory everything exists, and for whose glory everything was created, by whose arm everything is set forth[158] and from the fear of whom the entire internal[159] retinue quakes.
4. 'ŠSMṢ QTMPTG 'WSYYGG BY'MSYṢ TMTNYYṢ 'TTZMN YYQYN PPGHW PHWZYY ṢṢS HYY 'MṢS 'NSY HWYY. And its specification in the {pure} language is:[160] YHWH HH YHYH WWHY HH YH YH YHWH HW YH YH HY HYH WYH HWH YHWH HWY HY YHW YH YH HHWH YH HHYH.
5. Blessed be the name of His Majesty's glory for every and ever. All shall glorify and adorn Your name, for thus is Your love.

H. I adjure and command and institute you not to transgress my words[161] nor impede my words, nor change anything of my command; I have instituted and adjured and (§639) instituted[162] you, in peace.[163]

1. In the name of YHW HY 'Y HY YHW HB YH W' 'H B'H H'H YWH HY HW 'W YH HW YH YHH. Blessed be the name of His Majesty's glory for ever and ever. Ascend in peace and let me not fear when you depart from me.
2. In the name of 'H YHWH YHWH YH HYH, highest and holy Lord, in the name of YHWH of Hosts, God of the ranks of Israel, in the name of the Holy Creatures, in the name of the wheels of the Merkavah, in the name of the river of fire, YH, ZYY ZYYN and all his servants.[164] In the name of YH, seven [times];[165] YY YY, seven [times]; Ṣeva'ot, seven [times]; 'L, seven [times] Shaddai, seven [times]. I am that I am, 'H 'Y that 'HY 'Y 'HY 'Y that 'YH 'Y 'H Y'Y that 'Y YHY' that[166] YH Y'Y YHY 'YH YH YH.

[158] So MS. NY 8128. MS Oxf. 1531: *mpyrwš.*

[159] Heb. *penimit.* Cf. the Kabbalistic expression *Hokhmah penimit.*

[160] MS. NY 8128 adds the words *ṭhr bywd h'.* Cf. above.

[161] So MS. NY 8128.

[162] Redundant.

[163] Perhaps a closing formula, as in inscriptions.

[164] Reading *wkl šmšwy* with MS. NY 8128.

[165] That is, the name YH is to be repeated seven times. MS. NY 8128 writes the names out seven times.

[166] These names are permutations of God's utterance in Exod. 3:14. MS. NY 8128 lists the phrase as it is.

3. Magnificent, Ḥasin is His name, YH HW' HB HYH, which was revealed at Mt. Sinai, in the Glory of His Majesty.[167]

I. By these fearsome and strong names which can make the sun go dark, obscure the moon and overturn the sea, split open the dome [of heaven], and quench fire:

1. I adjure spirits and harmful beings[168] and demons and devils to go far away and leave N. son of N.

ANALYSIS

The Sar ha-Panim incantation is a striking demonstration that rituals in Hekhalot literature have as their goal the conjuration of an angel to come to the practitioner on earth. This text is quite explicit about the mechanics of that process. Unlike some of the Sar-Torah rituals, this text leaves no doubt that the conjuration of the angel is not to take place in the context of an ascent to heaven. The warning given by Rabbi Eliezer in response to Rabbi Ishmael's question (I A 1) is a case in point. The Sar ha-Panim is particularly fearsome and occupies an prominent position among the heavenly hosts. Therefore, when Rabbi Eliezer once tried to conjure him, "he tried to destroy the entire world."[169] Similarly, in the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah stories and in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* the angel rebukes Rabbi Ishmael for "disturbing the heavenly household," by compelling him to descend.[170] Rabbi Eliezer's warning thus accentuates the extraordinary nature of the act of bringing one of the principals of the heavenly retinue to the human realm. Although in Jewish angelology there are certainly angels who perform their missions on earth, there are, in some conceptions, those of a different class who serve in heaven.[171]

The purpose of conjuring the *Sar ha-Panim* is stated in I A: it is so that he will "reveal to humanity the secrets of above and below and the profundity of the foundations of below and the enigmas of wisdom and the skills of perspicacity." Like Sar-Torah rituals, the Sar ha-Panim incantation will result in the individual's extraordinary knowledge and intelligence. Unlike the testimonies to those rituals, however, this passage mentions neither the specific skills of memory and retention required for Torah study nor the

[167] The following is in Aramaic.

[168] Reading *dwyn* for *rywwn* with Schäfer, "Beschwörung," 136 n. 134.

[169] There is no evidence that the "world" mentioned here is considered by the author to be the internal world of the mystic; cf. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 174. Rather, it is the result of the volatility of the divine beings, who react when the proper conditions for their descent are met. On this idea, see Chapter 6 below.

[170] In Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah B the angel is the Sar-Torah; in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* it is the Sar ha-Panim.

[171] Cf. *Braita de-Ma'aseh Bereshit* §181, which makes a distinction between those angels that do work on earth and those that serve and praise God in heaven. On this text see Chapter 6 below.

genres of Torah, such as Mishnah or Talmud, that the practitioner will be able to master. It is apparent that the angel confers cosmological and esoteric secrets. But he is also said to grant the practitioner *ta'alumot ḥokhmah ve-'ormat toshiah.* In biblical Hebrew, these terms denote practical human traits, more in the realm of cunning and acumen than sacred knowledge. However, it is difficult to tell what these terms meant to the author of this text. *'Ormah* usually means cunning or prudence,[172] but the terms *ta'alumah* and *toshiah* are not common in rabbinic literature.

A source that may illuminate these terms is the medieval Italian Chronicle of Ahimaaz written in the eleventh century. In it, the author praises the wisdom and erudition of the sons of his ancestor Rabbi Amitai:

> He had fine and learned sons, wise, and intelligent, experts and poets,[173] teachers, who instructed diligent students, princes, leaders, who understood secrets [*mevine sodim*], composers of rhymes, knowers of mysteries [*yod'e razim*], examining wisdom, investigating into understanding, and inspecting *'ormah,* and enlightened in the *Sefer ha-Yashar,* and looking into the secret of the Merkavah. The first was R. Shefatiah, who engaged in *toshiah.*[174]

Ahimaaz, who wrote in a poetic prose style, wished to incorporate as many literary terms for Torah and wisdom as possible. In addition, he, like the author of the "mystical curriculum" in *Midrash Mishle* and others, included mystical and esoteric subjects along with poetry and traditional learning in his conception of the types of wisdom. The esoteric subjects he mentions include a book entitled *Sefer ha-Yashar*—probably a magical book[175]—and the vision of the Merkavah. In the same way, the author of our Sar ha-Panim text mined the biblical lexicon for terms for wisdom, and saw them as encompassing the halakhic, the esoteric, and the practical. To be sure, these types of wisdom are not unrelated. In wisdom literature in particular, exemplified by the biblical Proverbs and Avot in the rabbinic tradition, practical advice goes hand in hand with exhortations to study Torah.

The introduction's statement of the purpose of the ritual is borne out by the text of the incantation itself. In E 5 the practitioner is to call upon the angel to descend and fulfill his main request: "And when you descend, do not drive me insane, but reveal to me all the profundities of the mysteries of above and below and the secrets of the hidden places of above and the

[172] Jastrow, *Dictionary,* 1120.

[173] That is, liturgical poets (*payeṭanim*).

[174] Benjamin Klar, *Megillat 'Aḥimaaṣ,* 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Tarshish, 1973), p. 12, lines 12–16. For an English translation see Marcus Salzman, *The Chronicle of Ahimaaz* (1924; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1966).

[175] A magical book of that name is listed in Hai Gaon's responsum on mysticism and magic: see B. Lewin, *Oṣar ha-Geonim Ḥagigah,* 20.

mysteries of understanding and the skills of perspicacity, like a man who is speaking to his fellow." The phrase, "mysteries of understanding and the skills of perspicacity," is used in the introduction to the praxis. The Sar ha-Panim is thus to speak to the practitioner face-to-face and tell him the mysteries without affecting his sanity.[176]

The function of the Sar ha-Panim in this text can be compared with his role in Section II of *Ma'aseh Merkavah*. There he has two functions relevant to the praxis: he serves as the liaison between the human practitioner and the Divine bureaucracy; and he is the supervisor of the Sar-Torah, who is the guardian of the secrets of Torah. In *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* the Sar ha-Panim (there called PRQDM),[177] after rebuking Rabbi Ishmael, finally brought down "angels of mercy, [who] caused understanding to dwell in [his] heart." In both cases, the Sar ha-Panim is the agent of the practitioner's wisdom. However, the Sar-Torah does not figure in this incantation. Rather, the Sar ha-Panim is to grant wisdom directly to the adept. The adjuration is quite specific on this point: "[§634] By them I adjure you and command and ordain you, to hurry and descend to me, I, N son of N: you and not your messenger."

Another significant difference is in the ritual process itself. As in Sar-Torah rituals we have seen, the practitioner to purify himself by fasting, refraining from anointing, and washing himself of seminal pollution. Although other ritual texts in the Sar-Torah corpus prescribe ablution, none make the ablution a central aspect of the ritual as this ritual does. He is then to bathe in water up to his neck before adjuring the angel. It is not clear whether his adjuration is simply a precondition for the adjuration, or the adjuration is actually to be performed during while he is bathing. As we shall see in Chapter 6, this ritual follows an ancient pattern in which rivers were liminal points for encounters with the divine beings. The plea that the practitioner is to make before the adjuration (C 1) makes it clear that the angel's ferocity is motivated by his intolerance of impurity: "I adjure you, princes of dread, fear, and trembling, who are designated to injure anyone who is not clean and pure, and proceed to employ the servants of the Most High." The adjuration can now begin because, as stated in D, "he has sealed himself with the forty-two-letter name."

The ritual procedure has two main stages: The ritual preparation, including the ritual of immersion that accompanies the adjuration (B); and the adjuration itself (C–F). B is a regimen of preparation in which the practitioner fasts and rids himself of ritual purity. He is to perform purificatory ablutions for seven days (2) and to fast (1) and immerse up to his neck

[176] This latter detail is unusual. The author's concern that the practitioner's mental state will be affected by the angel is also reflected in the command in D 3 that the angel not frighten him. Cf. n. 178 below.

[177] The spelling of this name varies. See Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 84.

(3) on the final of day of the ritual. C is a preliminary adjuration to the hostile angels not to harm the practitioner. This is referred to in D as "seal[ing] himself with the forty-two-letter name, which the heavenly hosts will hear and dread and fear and tremble." The adjuration continues to the end of the passage in D–F. D contains another plea for protection; in this case, it is an appeal against the practitioner's fear and failure of nerve.[178]

E and F are additional units, added to the previous material by the word *shuv,* "again."[179] E is an adjuration by "fourteen names," which are evidently used by prophets to learn their secrets. As Schäfer points out, the idea of fourteen names is not known to us from another source.[180] However, fourteen is twice seven, and seven seals are listed in similar fashion in Section II of *Ma'aseh Merkavah.* The fourteen names are listed in 1 a. Each consists of the name proper, which is spelled out in full (*meforash,* here translated "specification") and an alternative name (*kinnuy,* translated as "substitute.)" The term *kinnuy* serves in rabbinic literature to designate pious circumlocutions for the Tetragrammaton.[181] The first of these names is *ruaḥ pisqonit,* an enigmatic name that figures in rabbinic tradition as an angel who defends Israel before God and as a name for Metatron in the *Shi'ur Qomah* and other names concerning the multiple names of the archangel.[182]

In 3, four of the names are said to be engraved on the heads of the holy Ḥayyot. Here the Merkavah exegesis serves to fortify the magical process of the incantation and not the other way around. Certainly no vision of the Merkavah is involved here. The names are powerful because they are en-

[178] Although Hekhalot narratives frequently describe the dread that accompanies the encounter with the angels, that idea does not often find its way into the text of an incantation. However, incantations against fear and trembling appear in magical amulets and handbooks. In some cases, such as MS. TS K1.18/30, an amulet for childbirth, adjurations for protection from fear are incorporated into incantations for other purposes; see Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 77–78. Cf. also MS. TS K1.94, for headache (Schiffman and Swartz, p. 99).

[179] This is a literary device linking discrete sources and does not mean that the rest of the incantation is to be recited if the previous one has not been effective. See Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 79; cf. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 176.

[180] Schäfer, "Beschwörung," 127 n. 40.

[181] J. Z. Lauterbach, "Substitutes for the Tetragrammaton," *PAAJR* (1930–31): 39–67. See also Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 175; see there also on the differences between the "specified" and "substitute" names in this list.

[182] B. Sanh. 44b, *Tanḥuma, ve-Zot ha-Berakhah* 6. See Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah,* 128–30. As Schäfer, "Beschwörung," 128 n. 44, points out, the fifth specified name in the series, SNYGRWN, is apparently derived from the word *senegorin,* "legal advocate," a appellation also given to the archangel Michael. On the term see D. Sperber, *A Dictionary of Greek and Latin Legal Terms in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1984), 128–29.

graved on the heads of the Ḥayyot and therefore lend authority to the practitioner's charge to the angels.

Having protected himself, first with the forty-two-letter name and then with the fourteen names, the magician enters his petition in 4–5 that the angel descend directly to him ("you and not your messenger") and reveal secrets to him. The adjuration is reinforced in 6, where the importance and miraculous qualities of the names he has uttered is attested.

F constitutes a new unit of the adjuration, this time employing "five names." F 5 consists of a threat to the angels: If they do not obey the magician they will be pushed into the river of fire known as *Rigayon*.[183] Although threats are not often discussed in accounts of prayer and incantation,[184] they do appear in Jewish magic. For example, in a Genizah amulet, TS K1.18/30, the angels are threatened that if they delay, they will be beaten with the iron rods of the matriarchs.[185] The bellicosity of the magician and his angelic allies also figures prominently in the Babylonian magic bowls.[186] G introduces further names and archangel traditions.

H is an adjuration for compelling the angel to return to heaven after meeting with the practitioner. At I, an Aramaic exorcism, apparently of different provenance, seems to have been appended to the incantation. Its purpose is to warn spirits away during the departure of the angel. The conception of the redactor seems to be that the practitioner is particularly vulnerable during those liminal stages when the angel descends to him and departs from him. He is thus in need of adjurations of protection before he brings him down (C) and when he sends him back up (I). This incantation includes a motif found in many magical texts—that of the powerful name that has the power to command the forces of nature.[187]

SUMMARY

The Sar ha-Panim incantation provides a complete ritual for gaining prophetic wisdom—a wisdom not explicitly linked to Torah. The function of the Sar ha-Panim, as in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and 3 Enoch, is to inform the practitioner of the secrets of heaven. However, he does so in this ritual as a result of the magician's adjuration.

Although this text has several themes in common other Hekhalot and

[183] On the Rigayon, see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, 176, and Schäfer, "Beschwörung," 133, n. 91.

[184] See Peter Metcalf, *Where Are You, Spirits: Style and Theme in Berawan Prayer* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 11.

[185] Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts*, 73. On the iron rods see the commentary on p. 82.

[186] See Baruch A. Levine, "The Language of the Magical Bowls," in Neusner, *Babylonia* 5:361–64.

[187] On a poetic figure based on this idea, see Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts*, 118–20.

Sar-Torah texts, the incantation itself differs in its style from the magical prayers in the Sar-Torah narratives. This passage employs the formal vocabulary of Jewish magical incantations. The expressions *mashbia' 'ani 'alekha,* "I adjure you," and *gozer 'ani 'alekha,* "I command you," are standard adjuration formulae of amulet texts in both Palestinian and Babylonian magical traditions.[188] The use of the form *ploni ben ploni,* "N. son of N.," is typical of magical handbooks. Moreover, there are several rhetorical devices and motifs, such as the threat to the angels, found in magical texts.

This use of conventional magical formulae has implications for the meaning of the incantation. In this ritual, the angel is adjured directly by means of the language of magical power. In Jewish magical incantation formulae, the practitioner commands the angel by the divine authority vested in the magical names. Those names, like the seal of the king authorizing an individual to carry out his instructions, prove to a hostile angel that the human being who commands him is not an impertinent invader, but someone to be respected and obeyed.[189]

§501 (542): An Aramaic Sar ha-Panim Incantation

This brief passage is an incantation ritual for bringing the angel Azriel to earth. It is one of several miscellaneous magical texts that appear between *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* and *Ma'aseh Merkavah* in the principal manuscripts of the *Synopse.* In MSS. NY 8128 and Oxf. 1531 it follows a short passage on the twenty-two-letter name at §501; in MS. M22 it follows the cosmological text *Seder Rabbah de-Bereshit* and an incantation unique in the Hekhalot corpus that is apparently for protection from sorcery and theft. In MS. NY 8128 it precedes a ritual for reciting passages from Psalms (§502) and in MSS. Oxf. 1531 at §512 it precedes a brief passage on the divine name (*shem ha-meforash*). The text is largely in Aramaic. A shorter version of this paragraph also appears in the Genizah fragment TS K21.95.S without the accompanying ritual instructions.[190]

TRANSLATION

I. Petition:[191]

A. I adjure you, Prince of the Presence,

[188] See Swartz, "Scribal Magic," 173–74.

[189] Ibid., 179.

[190] Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* G1.D.18. This fragment is one of the oldest and most significant of Hekhalot literature, as it contains passages from *Hekhalot Rabbati* and other texts in radically different order from that in the Haside Ashkenazic and related manuscripts that contain most of the Hekhalot corpus. See Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction," 11.

[191] Heb. *šyl.*

1. in the name of YH YHWH of Hosts, in the name of 'BṬḤ 'H YHWH of Hosts, in the name of ŠR YH YHWH of Hosts, in the name of God TYQRTYN YHWH of Hosts, in the name of Akhatriel YWY, God of Israel, which is sealed on the crown and spelled out[192] on His throne: 'KWRSṬYH 'ṬṬYH NṬṬYH NṬṬYH YṬṬYH 'Ṭ'Ṭ 'ṬYYH,
2. to send me 'Azriel the angel this night.

B. Fast for 3 days and nights

1. and say [it] seventy times in purity and holiness,
2. and he will speak to you face to face.

C. To let him go:

1. I adjure you, 'Azriel the angel {in the name} of Michael and in the name of Hadriel, that you depart in peace and not harm me.

ANALYSIS

This text states no purpose for the incantation beyond that of adjuring the Sar ha-Panim to send the angel Azriel. Nor does the incantation contain a petition for wisdom. The word, *'š'yl,* "I petition," which begins the passage in MSS. NY 8128 and Oxf. 1531, may refer to the request for the descent of the angel, or it may indicate that the angel is to be conjured so that he may fulfill other requests of the adjurer. However, the structure of the ritual is the same as that of the longer Sar ha-Panim incantation analyzed above. At A 1–2, the practitioner adjures the Sar ha-Panim to bring the angel down, as in §634. There is also a fasting ritual at B that accompanies the incantation. Like the Sar ha-Panim, the angel will speak to the practitioner "face to face." Moreover, C, like §639, is an adjuration to bid the angel to return to heaven without harming the human practitioner. There is no evidence that one of these texts is dependent on the other. Rather, the similarities attest to a common pattern and conception of the conjuration of the angel reflected in both.

Conclusions

The previous chapter presented the complexes of interlocking narrative traditions that constitute the major Sar-Torah texts. The texts presented here encompass a greater variety of forms and themes. They attest to the extent to which Sar-Torah concerns affected other aspects of the Hekhalot and magical traditions. In Sar-Torah ritual texts and Sar ha-Panim incantations we see the tradition presented largely without narrative. In this, they resemble other magical and incantatory texts, which simply give instructions directly to the reader without couching them in testimony or myth.

[192] Heb. *meforash.*

In the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* fragments, we see the opposite effect: ritual aspects of the Sar-Torah phenomenon are subsumed in a story of ascent, revelation, and divine persona.

With this variety, however, there are commonalities. Sar-Torah and related texts all reflect the conviction that human beings can acquire wisdom and skill in learning Torah through attraction of an angel, who is the guardian of cosmic and scholastic knowledge. In this way ordinary Jews can become like great rabbis. This attraction takes place through a ritual process that involves self-denial and the correct pronouncement of magical names and formulae. Ritual and revelation are thus major themes of the Sar-Torah literature. These themes are explored in the following chapters.

PART III

Ritual and Revelation

Chapter 6

RITUAL AND PURITY

RITUAL IS a central focus of the Sar-Torah texts we have examined. Both the narrative texts, such as the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah and the Aramaic Sar-Torah text in *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* have as their purpose the presentation and recommendation of a ritual for skill in Torah. In the preceding analysis, the place of these rituals in the narrative and redactional framework has been described. This chapter is an inquiry into the meaning and function of these rituals.

RITUAL AND VISION

It has been common to consider the rituals of fasting, ablution, and seclusion in Hekhalot literature as specifically designed for achieving the state of ecstasy usually associated with the ascent to the divine throne depicted in Hekhalot literature. Scholem states, "This mystical ascent is always preceded by ascetic practices."[1] For Ithamar Gruenwald, dietary prohibitions are to be explained chiefly in terms of their effect of the physical strength and consciousness of the mystic.[2] Likewise, he describes the effect of the menstruant on the mystic as "distracting."[3] Recently, however, this view has been called into question.[4]

The first clear evidence for the notion that ritual preparation is necessary for the vision of the heavens is found in a responsum by the eleventh-century Babylonian rabbinic leader Hai Gaon. This discussion has been very influential in setting the tone for how this literature has been studied.[5] In this responsum, Hai describes the Hekhalot literature as he understands it:

> Perhaps you know that many of the sages believed that whoever is worthy, [possessing] several [moral] attributes which are mentioned and specified, when he wants to see the Merkavah and glimpse the Hekhalot of the angels on high, there are ways of doing so. He is to sit in fasting a certain number of

[1] Scholem, *Major Trends,* 49.

[2] See for example Gruenwald, "Manichaeism and Judaism," 269 n. 37.

[3] Gruenwald, "Manichaeism and Judaism," 268 n. 33.

[4] See David J. Halperin, "A New Edition of Hekhalot Literature," *JAOS* 104 (1984): 550. See also Schäfer, "Aim and Purpose," 284; and Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven,* 106–10.

[5] See for example Scholem, *Major Trends,* 49.

days, and lay his head between his knees, and whisper[6] many songs and praises, which are specified, to the ground. And so you can glimpse inside it and its chambers as one who sees with his eyes the seven Hekhalot and sees as if he is entering from one Hekhal to another, and sees what is in it.[7]

David Halperin has shown that Hai Gaon's account of the phenomenon can be traced to an extant written source, a passage in what has come to be known as *Hekhalot Zutarti*.[8] Furthermore, according to Halperin, Hai has misunderstood that passage. The text reads:

Rabbi Akiba said: Whoever wishes to repeat this *mishnah* and to pronounce the name in its full elaboration,[9] must sit fasting for forty days and rest his head between his knees until his fast gets hold of him. Then he must whisper to the ground and not to heaven, so that the earth will hear and not heaven. If he is married, he must be prepared,[10] for three days, as it is written: "Be prepared; do not go near a woman" [Exod. 19:15]. . . . He should do this regularly every month and every year for thirty days before the New Year from the first of Elul to the Day of Atonement so that no satan or evil plague will attack him all year.

Here the fast is undertaken in preparation for the recitation of the powerful divine name. The reason the practitioner is to rest his head between one's knees is so that he can avoid fainting and "so that the earth will hear," and not so that he will obtain a vision.[11] As Halperin observes, "It is hard to imagine how any of this could fit in with the heavenly ascensions. But, as a forty-day ritual designed to insure a favorable decision on the day of judgment, it makes some sense."[12] It is useful to look at this passage in context to see how such a misunderstanding may have come about.

Hekhalot Zutarti is a set of discrete traditions regarding the Merkavah

[6] *Loḥesh*. Often used of incantations.

[7] B. M. Lewin, ed., *'Oṣar ha-Geonim* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1931) 4 (*Ḥagigah*): 14.

[8] Halperin, "New Edition," 550. It is unclear whether Hai is working from purely literary sources (as Halperin assumes), from second-hand oral reports quoting this passage, or a combination of these. His statement there that "this matter is well-known" (*mefursam ve-yedua'*) would argue against the view that he must have had the actual text of *Hekhalot Zutarti* before him. However, neither does it mean that his informants were first-hand witnesses to the phenomenon.

[9] Heb. *Le-faresh 'et ha-shem be-ferusho*. The term *prš* refers to the full pronunciation of the divine name, either the Tetragrammaton or one of the more esoteric versions. See W. Bacher, "Shem ha-Meforash," *JE* 9:262–64.

[10] That is, refrain from marital relations; see Halperin, "New Edition," 550.

[11] Cf. §489 in which the practitioner is to cast his eyes down so as to avoid gazing at the divine presence.

[12] Halperin, "New Edition," 550.

and the angels surrounding the throne, the potent names by which heaven and earth were created, and other matters.[13] Section 424 is one of a series of testimonies appended to the ascent traditions that take up the bulk of *Hekhalot Zutarti* at a later stage in its redaction. In the previous testimony (§423), Rabbi Akiba hears a voice (*bat qol*) from below the divine throne saying that the mystic who has been painstaking in the ascent and descent to the Merkavah will "receive God's blessing three times a day, every day in the supernal court and in the earthly court in which they repeat [*shonin*] it." The blessings thus result from the recitation of the text.

Similarly, §424 lists the benefits of reciting "this Mishnah," that is, the ascent texts that precede it, which presumably contain the powerful divine name. This passage resembles statements found in the *Shi'ur Qomah* and other texts regarding the power of a book or tradition.[14] In contrast to the body of the texts themselves, which deal with the journey to heaven or the nature of God, these testimonies promise very palpable rewards.[15] Because of its placement in the redactional structure of *Hekhalot Zutarti*, §424 then came to be regarded as describing the ascetic ritual that accompanied the ascent of the tannaim to the Merkavah. This is probably how Hai Gaon understood it. Indeed, this interpretation made sense to the redactor who placed this testimony there in the first place. To him, the ascent texts in *Hekhalot Zutarti* were no less deserving of such a testimony than those texts in the corpus that have more practical goals, such as the Sar-Torah texts.

Nor is the mention of a fasting ritual a surprising feature of this passage. Similar testimonies, especially in the introductions to magical books, make a point of specifying the exceptional conditions under which the book or tradition must be used. Among these conditions are ritual purity and a regimen of preparation. An introduction to a magical book from the Cairo Genizah (TS K1.21) provides an example.[16] The text enumerates the wonderful things the magical names and spells in the book will accomplish:

[13] See Schäfer, "Aufbau und redactionelle Identität der Hekhalot Zutarti."

[14] See, for example, §377 (940) in *Shi'ur Qomah;* §500 (712), an independent testimony; and §547 (from *Ma'aseh Merkavah*). Note too that §§424–26 is followed in all of the principal manuscripts in the *Synopse* except for MS. Munich 22 by §§489–95, which is also an elaborate ritual for reciting a book. On this literary pattern attesting to the origins and power of the text see Chapter 7.

[15] So too a set of hymns that introduce *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§83–92) praises the glories (*gedullah*) available to anyone who knows the text's secrets, including the ability to tell simply by looking at a person how many illegitimate ancestors he has, and the horrid punishments that will befall his enemies. On these hymns see Wewers, "Überlegenheit."

[16] This introduction is parallel to the introduction to *Sefer ha-Malbush* (printed in *Sefer Raziel* [Amsterdam, 1701], fol. 2b), and to *Sefer ha-Razim,* 2:8–10; cf. 5:34–35. See Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim,* 33–34.

ואם על נחש ושרף ועקרב וכל רחש וכל
רמש הוא מזכירו היה מצחק בם כצפור
ואם על השמש והיריח הוא מזכירו היה
מושל בם כצדיק מושל
ביראת אלהים וגם על כל רוח ופגע ושד ושטן
וטלני זכר או נקבה הוא מזכירו והיו מאוזינים
קולו ואם על קרב ומלחמה הוא מזכירו
היו נשמעים לפניו

And if he recites it [the magical name] over a snake or venomous serpent or scorpion, reptile or creeping thing, he can play with them as [with] a bird, and if [he recites it] over the sun and the moon, he can have mastery over them as a righteous man rules by the fear of God,[17] and likewise over any spirit and plague and demon and satan and shadow, male or female. . .(lines 3–8)

This is a typical passage in which the powers of the magical names contained in the book are advertised. The text continues, however, with detailed instructions as to how the book is to be used:

וכל מי שינהג
בספר הזה יהא מטהר עצמו כ'א' יום שלשה
שבועים ימים ולא יאכל בהם כל בצל ושום
ו[לא] בשר ולא כל דקה ולא כל שהוא מוציא
דם ובכל יום ויום יהיה רץ על הרהט ורוחץ
בטהרה פעם אחת {בשחר} ופעם אחת בין הער
הערבים ולא יהלך בו ברוח גסה כי אם
בענוה ובישרות לב ובטהרה יתנהג בו
וכל מי שיתנהג בו בקדושה יחכים ויערים

And anyone who would apply this book, let him purify himself for 21 days, [that is,] three weeks of days, and not eat during them any onion or garlic, nor meat or any smaller [animal], nor anything that produces blood.[18] Every single day he should run over the trough and bathe in purity once in the

[17] Cf. 2 Sam. 23:3. That is, by employing solar and lunar divination the magician will be able to achieve the same power that a saint possesses by virtue of his righteousness; on that verse cf. the interpretation in b. Moed Qaṭ 16b, according to which the righteous are able to rule over God because they can avert his decree. This idea has affinities to what Moshe Idel calls "augmentation theurgy," by which good deeds augment the Godhead; see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives,* 157–66. Cf. also §225, in which Rabbi Neḥuniah is said to "have mastery of the light of Torah" (*moshel ba-'or shel Torah*).

[18] Heb., *moṣi dam.* Cf. Prov. 30:33. It is unclear whether this refers to eating animals in whom blood circulates, or to carnivores that shed blood, such as the carnivorous birds that would be prohibited in any case according to Lev. 11:13–19; cf. Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 68.

morning[19] and once at twilight. And he should not apply [the book] arrogantly, but in humility and sincerity and [with] a pure heart. (lines 10–18)[20]

As in the testimony in *Hekhalot Zutarti,* the juxtaposition of the themes of the practical uses for the book and the regimen for reciting it in purity and sincerity serves to impress on the reader the book's sacred and powerful qualities. The inclusion of ritual prescriptions in Hekhalot and magical texts thus has a rhetorical as well as practical function.[21]

Ritual in the Sar-Torah Texts

In the extant Hekhalot literature, then, fasting is not explicitly prescribed for the purpose of the vision of the Merkavah. Rather, regimens of fasts, abstentions, and ablutions occur primarily in the Sar-Torah literature and the related texts examined above. These texts, rather than providing instructions for ascent to heaven, concern the conjuration of an angel to come to the practitioner.

This is a peculiar genre of ritual literature. As we have seen, most of the rituals are set into a highly formalized narrative framework. In the Sar-Torah narratives, instructions on how to perform the ritual are usually given to the narrator by his teacher and are followed by a story attesting to its success. These passages were composed in such a way as to highlight the ritual and recommend it to the reader. They are thus in some sense ritual texts, but are not purely prescriptive.

Principal Features of the Rituals

Several types of ritual activities are prevalent in the principal texts. In describing them, it is important to establish a cultural and conceptual framework that makes these texts comprehensible. We therefore must cast our net rather broadly, into a wide range of halakhic, midrashic, and ancient Mediterranean sources.

One element common to all of these rituals is the recitation of a set of powerful divine names. It is clear from their structure that the name is the principal ingredient that gives the rituals their efficacy. Emphasis on the names of God and the angels is also an indispensable characteristic of Jewish magic in general.[22] The active ingredient in the Sar-Torah ritual

[19] The word *bšḥr* is written above the line and the letters *byn* have been crossed out.

[20] Cf. *Ma'aseh Merkavah* §544, on how the prayers for seeing the Merkavah are to be recited: "[there must be] purity and holiness in his heart, and he recites a prayer."

[21] On this point see also Swartz, "Book and Tradition."

[22] See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 78–103; Swartz, "Scribal Magic," 179; Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 40–43.

taught by Rabbi Neḥuniah to Rabbi Ishmael is a set of names called the "Great Crown." Many isolated paragraphs in the Hekhalot corpus consist of little more than instructions for recitation of a name. One of the most striking of such rituals appears in a difficult Aramaic text (§§489–95) which identifies itself as a marvelous book containing an all-purpose "Great Name."[23]

In talmudic tradition the divine name is to be recited and taught under special ritual circumstances. B. Qid. 71 describes the benefits that accrue to anyone who knows and preserves the forty-two-letter name in purity.[24] So too our rituals, which emphasize the recitation of divine names, are concerned with reciting those names in ritual purity.

Fasting and Diet

One of the most persistent components of these rituals is the requirement to fast. In most cases the term "fast" refers to partial fasting or special dietary restrictions for a certain period of time. In many texts which prescribe fasts for long periods the reader is then told that he must eat bread baked with his own hands. In some cases a full fast takes place during the daytime only, or for a few days. Common durations of such fasts are forty days and three days. The number forty is no doubt based on Moses' sojourn on Mount Sinai (Exod. 24:18). Likewise, the Israelites were instructed to prepare for three days to receive the Decalogue (Exod. 19:15). The practitioner thus replicates the preconditions for revelation in his reception of the secrets of Torah.[25]

Fasting is a particularly salient example of the multivalence of ritual behavior. Fasts occur for a wide variety of motives in ancient Judaism and its environment.[26] There are fasts of contrition, both statutory and occasional, the most prominent of these being Yom Kippur. Fasting and refraining from several pleasures—including wine, meat, and sexual relations—are ritual signs of mourning.[27] There is also evidence in ancient Judaism for fasting for mantic purposes, equivalent to the practice of

[23] A portion of this text has been translated by Gruenwald, "Manichaeism and Judaism," 267–70. The text is notable because it combines many of the principal ritual and rhetorical motifs of the Sar-Torah and allied texts into a coherent whole, although its purpose is not for the cultivation of that particular angel.

[24] On this and related sources see Schiffman, "Forty-Two Letter Divine Name."

[25] Cf. also the Aramaic Sar-Torah ritual in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (§§572–78), in which a fast from the new moon of Sivan to Shavuot is prescribed, thus reinforcing the link with Moses' revelation. The relationship of the Sar-Torah literature to midrashim about Moses' ascent has been analyzed extensively in Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot.*

[26] See Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects"; cf. Chapter 1.

[27] On the meaning of these patterns see Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1991).

mantic fasting in the Greco-Roman world described by Rudolph Arbesmann.[28] A story in the Palestinian Talmud tells of rabbis who fasted at a graveyard to see Rabbi Ḥiyya the Great in a dream.[29] The Babylonian Talmud (b. Sanh. 65b) discusses those who fast so that an "unclean spirit" may rest on them. Some sources concern individuals who fast to bring down a "man of dreams" (*'ish ḥalom*), that is, an angel appointed over dreams who answers the dreamer's questions.[30]

Sar-Torah rituals often specify certain kinds of food that are forbidden. A few such texts advise the practitioner not to eat meat or fish; the magical text quoted above refers to "anything that produces blood." Abstention from meat plays a part in an important source for asceticism in the early rabbinic period, the story of the "mourners of Zion" of the first century who supposedly abstained from meat and wine as a sign of mourning and because of its use in the fallen Temple.[31] This story, in which Yoḥanan ben Zakkai persuades the sect to modify their mourning practices, is usually seen as an example of rabbinic discouragement of ascetic practices.[32] However, it can also be seen as an indicator of the range of foods and actions considered to be luxurious and thus inappropriate.[33]

An interesting use of the motif of the ritual fast is found in Version B of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah. In this story, Rabbi Ishmael, who is thirteen years old, is in great affliction because of his inability to retain his learning. He tries to remedy the situation on his own: "When I saw that my learning was not remaining with me, I stood and refrained [*tafasti aṣmi*] from eating, drinking, washing, anointing, and sexual activity, and no word of song or melody passed from my mouth" (§308).

Rabbi Ishmael's practice is reminiscent of old mourning rituals and penitential and petitionary rituals for Yom Kippur and times of drought.[34] This cluster of activities constitutes signs of joy that are restricted in times of crisis or mourning.[35] Rabbi Ishmael's fast is thus a sign of his contrition

[28] Rudolph Arbesmann, "Fasting and Prophecy in Pagan and Christian Antiquity," *Traditio* 7 (1949): 9–32; cf. S. Lowy, "The Motivation of Fasting in Talmudic Literature," *JJS* 9 (1958): 30–38.

[29] Y. Kil. 9:4 (32b) and y. Ketub. 12:3 (35a); see Lowy, "Motivation of Fasting," 36–38 (his citation of the latter source on p. 37 n. 170, should be corrected). A series of stories describing fasting for visions appears in Qoh. R. 9:8.

[30] See, for example, t. Ma'as. Sheni 5:9; cf. y. Ma'as. Sheni 55b; in b. Sanh. 30a the term is *ba'al ḥalom*.

[31] T. *Sota* 15:10–15.

[32] See Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects," 271–72; Ephraim E. Urbach, "*'Asqesis ve-Yissurin be-Torat Ḥazal*," in *Me-'Olamim shel Ḥakhamim: Qoveṣ Meḥqarim* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 445–46.

[33] Cf. Anderson, *Time to Mourn*, 112–14, which stresses the relevance of this pattern for communal mourning rituals.

[34] Cf. the list in m. Yoma 8:1.

[35] Anderson, *Time To Mourn*, 112–14. Weeping can constitute both a literary motif for

and grief. Rabbi Neḥuniah then rescues him by taking him from his father's house to the Temple and having him adjure by the Great Seal, a magical name. This name accomplishes the task and is subsequently recommended to the reader. It is therefore an effective substitute for Rabbi Ishmael's fast.

However, in a similar story that appears a few paragraphs below,[36] young Rabbi Ishmael has been fasting for forty days for the same purpose. He manages to bring down Yofiel, the Angel of the Presence, who proceeds to question his motives. After being assured that Rabbi Ishmael conjured him for the sake of heaven,[37] the angel instructs him in the correct procedure: "Whoever wants it to be revealed to him[38] must sit fasting for forty days, perform twenty-four immersions every day, and not eat anything defiling. He must not look at a woman, and must sit in a totally dark house" (§314). Whereas the behavior described here is similar to Rabbi Ishmael's above, the emphasis has shifted from the patterns of mourning to the Rabbi Ishmael's physical purity.

One intriguing detail that appears in several of these texts is the prohibition of certain kinds of vegetables. The Sar-Torah texts in *Merkavah Rabbah* and *Hekhalot Rabbati* tell the mystic to avoid vegetables of every kind. The incantation for the Great Name instructs, "He shall not eat onion, garlic, or garden vegetables";[39] so too the magical manual quoted above. The exact reason for these prohibitions is unclear. One possibility may reside in their susceptibility to ritual impurity. Unlike Daniel's beans, "wet" foods can contract impurity more easily.[40] Arbesmann notes the custom of "xerophagy" among the Montanists, who, according to Tertullian, refrained from meat, wine, succulent fruit, and anything juicy.[41] If the authors advised avoidance of luxuries like meat and wine, they may also have had in mind the memory of onions and garlic that prompted the Israelites to complain to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai (Num. 11:5).[42]

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the expression of grief and a ritual act in itself; see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives,* 75–88; cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven,* 107–8.

[36] §§313–14. A parallel to this story also appears in *Ma'aseh Merkavah;* see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 86–89.

[37] Rabbi Ishmael says, "I did not bring you down for my glory, but to do the will of your creator" (reading *kevodi* for the manuscript's *kevodekha,* "your glory," which may be a pious circumlocution). Cf. Jonathan ben Uzziel's reply in b. Meg. 3a to the heavenly voice that rebukes him for revealing divine secrets in his Targum.

[38] This clause is in Aramaic.

[39] §489.

[40] The Mishnah tractate *Makhshirim,* based on Lev. 11:34 and 38, is built on this assumption; on foods that are under presumption of impurity, see chapter 6 of that tractate.

[41] Arbesmann, "Fasting and Prophecy," 2, n. 9, citing Tertullian *De ieiunio* 1.

[42] Cf. Tertullian, *De ieiunio* 5.

Another reason may be that these foods can cause indigestion and bodily odors.[43]

Alongside of these prohibitions are instructions about what to eat. Here too a pattern of avoidance is reflected. Persistent in the instructions is the injunction that the practitioner should "eat bread of his own hands."[44] More specifically, he should not eat bread baked by a woman.[45] This detail is part of a larger emphasis on avoiding any trace of menstrual impurity, and can be placed with other such precautions. The Sar-Torah ritual in Section 2 of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* contains an instruction to "eat one's bread with salt."[46] The same phrase appears in an appendix to m. Avot (Avot 6:4) to exemplify the Sage's simple life.[47]

The Aramaic Sar-Torah text in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (§§571–78) involves an unusual ritual of eating and drinking. The practitioner is instructed to make a certain kind of "cooked bread"[48] and go down to the river. He then performs a ritual involving writing magical names on leaves and a silver cup, dissolving them in wine, and drinking the wine. This stands in contrast to the prohibition of wine in other Sar-Torah rituals. However, several magical texts include incantations to be recited over wine.[49]

One detail provides a clue to some of these specific dietary prohibitions. In the course of a ritual for the Sar-Torah to be practiced supposedly by a disciple of the sages (*talmid ḥakham*), the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah prohibits what it calls "any thing filthy" (*kol davar mezoham*).[50] One might ask, as Halperin has done, what kind of advanced rabbinical student would eat unclean or defiling foods.[51] One possible answer to this question is that the term *mezoham* or *zohama'* probably does not refer to foods that are forbidden to all Jews according to Leviticus

[43] Cf. also Gruenwald, "Manichaeism and Judaism," 269–70. Gruenwald cites sources that maintain that vegetables compromise one's health and notes that Mani and the Elchasaites refrained from certain kinds of vegetables. Garlic was also seen as an aphrodisiac throughout the Mediterranean, and it may have been avoided in these rituals because it would encourage seminal emission. See Rosner, *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine,* 461–62, citing b. B. Qam. 82a.

[44] See §§299, 684, and 489.

[45] §489 and G19, line 12.

[46] §560.

[47] Chapter 6 of Avot is a post-mishnaic composition known as *Pereq Qinyan Torah* and appears at the end of that tractate as well as in extracanonical tractates. See M. B. Lerner, "The Tractate Avot," in Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages,* 1:273–75.

[48] On this term, see Chapter 5.

[49] There are rituals for recitation of an incantation over the wine of *havdalah;* such a ritual, for *petiḥat lev,* is found in MS. TS K1.117 fol. 2a. See also Scholem, "*Havdalah de-Rabbi Akiba*" and the discussion in Chapter 2 above. In MS. TS K1.101, a man who has been prevented from seeing his wife is to recite magical names over a cup of wine and drink.

[50] §314. Cf. §560, which prohibits *kol mine zohama',* "any kind of defilement."

[51] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 379–80.

11 and related rabbinic laws (that is, not kosher), but foods that are dirty or have a foul odor.[52] As we shall see, these rituals often seek to avoid odors. Another possibility is that it refers to impure foods, or at least foods that do not match the peculiar criteria for purity found in these texts. Foods that are not forbidden but are contaminated with ritual impurity may be eaten by lay Israelites, and especially outside of the land of Israel. Even if in the fictional setting of this story, the Temple mount, Rabbi Nehuniah and Rabbi Ishmael would have had to eat their food in purity, it could not have been taken for granted that the reader would need to do so—especially if, as is plausible, he lived in the diaspora.[53]

Sexual Purity and Social Avoidance

Concern with sexual purity is an essential element of these rituals. This concern is manifest in two related ways: the prohibition of sexual activity and seminal emission,[54] and a deep concern with menstrual purity. Here too the injunction at Sinai not to go near a woman (Exod. 19:15) provides a precedent for the individual's encounter with the Sar-Torah. Although m. Ber. 3:4 prohibits a man who has had a seminal emission from reciting the blessing over the *Shema'*, the parallel in Tosefta explicitly permits other categories of impure persons to study.[55] However, as Shaye Cohen observes, although the restrictions on the ejaculant in the synagogue are older and more authentic, they were largely ignored in many Jewish communities in favor of unauthorized popular restrictions on menstruants.[56]

The concern with menstrual impurity, *niddah,* forms the basis for some of the most historically significant details in this literature. The requirement mentioned above that the practitioner eat "bread of his own hands" serves two allied purposes. It allows him to maintain his isolation, which is

[52] Cf. b. Shab. 108a, where the term *zohama* refers to foul odors.

[53] Cf., however, b. Nid. 20b and 52b, where *zhm* is clearly distinguished from menstrual impurity. For evidence of the Sar-Torah practice in the diaspora see §305.

[54] The reader is sometimes instructed that if an emission occurs, he must bathe and repeat the entire regimen from the first day, as the resulting pollution has invalidated the entire preparation. See §684 and §489.

[55] T. Ber. 2:12–13. See Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-feshuṭah, Zera'im* vol. 1, p. 20.

[56] Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Purity and Piety: The Separation of Menstruants from the Sancta," in *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue,* ed. Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 103–15. On popular customs relating to menstruants see Yedidya Dinari, "*Minhage Ṭum'at ha-Niddah—Meqoram ve-Hishtalshelutam,*" *Tarbiṣ* 49 (1979–80): 302–24; idem, "*Ḥillul ha-Qodesh 'al-yede Niddah ve-Taqqanat 'Ezra,*" *Te'udah* 3 (1983): 17–37; Mordechai A. Friedman, "*Harḥaqat ha-Niddah ve-ha-Minut 'Eṣel ha-Rambam u-Veno R. 'Avraham 'Al-Pi Kitve Genizat Qahir,*" in *Maimonidean Studies,* ed. Arthur Hyman (New York: Yeshivah University Press, 1990), 1:1–21 (Hebrew Section); and Daniel Sperber, *Minhage Yisra'el: Meqorot ve-Toledot* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1989), 222–34. See further below.

an important component of the ritual.[57] It also ensures that he will not come into contact with menstrual impurity. In fact, in parallel texts the injunction to eat *leḥem yadav,* "bread of his own hands," alternates in the versions with the prohibition of *leḥem 'ishah,* "bread of a woman." The intricacies of rabbinic and non-rabbinic laws and customs of the menstruant woman (*niddah*) also play a part in the primary ritual text in the ascent traditions, the deposition of Rabbi Neḥuniah from heaven, which are examined below.

The isolation of the individual is reinforced in a general way. According to the Sar-Torah text in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§299), the practitioner must sleep alone for twelve days in a room or attic. In one version of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah (§314), he is to sit in a dark house. Some texts prohibit looking at women or other people. In one case Rabbi Ishmael is to keep his eyes down and does not even look at colored material.[58] A Genizah fragment stipulates: "He goes and sits in a house by himself, and he should be in fasting all day and does not eat bread of a woman and does not look either at a man or a woman. And when he walks in the marketplace he averts his eyes from all creatures and does not look even at a one-day-old child."[59] The Aramaic incantation for the Great Name instructs: "He must not see the face of a male or female twin, nor see the face of a male or female leper,[60] nor see the face of a male or female with a discharge,[61] nor see the face of a menstruant woman" (§489).

This passage lists, for the most part, classes of persons who are unclean according to biblical law. Lepers, those who have an abnormal flux (*zov*), and menstruants are all impure according to Lev. 13–15.[62] The taboo on twins, however, is a mysterious detail. Research thus far has turned up no such taboo in classical Judaism. Indeed, b. Yeb. 98a states that twins are simply the result of the splitting of a drop of semen, and therefore, presumably, an explainable and natural phenomenon. It is possible that this statement was intended to refute a folk-belief to the opposite effect—one that is reflected in our text. Another possibility is raised by Gruenwald's observation that according to Song of Songs Rabbah and parallels, twins are susceptible to each other's diseases.[63] Thus, the twin you meet in the

[57] See below.

[58] §560. Cf. b. 'Abod. Zar. 20b, which warns against looking at a woman's colored garments.

[59] G19 lines 11–14.

[60] *Sgyr'* and *sgyrt'*. The term *sgyr* derives from the meaning of the root *sgr* as "quarantined," as in the procedure for lepers according to Lev. 13:46. Cf. t. Neg. 6:1.

[61] This latter category is lacking in one recension of this text, represented by MSS. Moscow Ginzburg 90 and 175, MS. Cambridge Add. 405.4, and MS. Florence Plut. 44.131.

[62] The word *ṣara'at* is translated here as "leprosy," although it probably does not refer to Hanson's disease. On these terms and regulations see Levine, *Leviticus,* 75–99.

[63] Gruenwald, "Manichaeism and Judaism," 267 n. 31.

market may have come down with some contamination from his or her brother or sister miles away.[64]

More significant for our purposes is that, according to the halakhah, one does not contract impurity merely by looking at a person who is impure in these ways. These prohibitions, then, not only go beyond the halakhic norm, but reflect concepts at odds with the rabbinic purity system. However, the authors are not oblivious to that system; nor are these practices merely an eccentric hyperextension of normative purity rituals thought up by an individual. There is evidence that other Jews in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages also considered pollution to be something that could occur even through the most casual contact with the contaminated person—in this case, the menstruant. A curious text known as *Braita de-Massekhet Niddah,* which purports to relate extratalmudic statements of the sages regarding menstruation, claims that the impurity of *niddah* can be transmitted through the earth on which the menstruant walks and even through her speech or breath.[65] A medieval legend illustrates the notion that looking at an impure creature is enough to contaminate or harm a person. This text is a miraculous birth narrative about Rabbi Ishmael, the hero of the Hekhalot literature.[66] In this tale, Ishmael's saintly mother and father are distressed because she has not borne a child that survived. The couple decides that she must immerse in a ritual bath before they conceive. Then "she immersed, and she encountered a pig. She returned to the

[64] Gruenwald, ibid., takes the prohibition to mean that the individual is prohibited from looking at his own twin. However, this reading is not supported by the text, which affixes no possessive pronouns to the words *tywm'* and *tywmt'*. Another clue to this prohibition may be found in b. Pes. 110a–114a, which discusses the practice of avoiding pairs when eating, drinking, and attending to one's bodily needs; doing these in pairs is said to make one vulnerable to demons. However, there is no suggestion there that the taboo would be extended to the avoidance of human pairs.

[65] *Braita de-Massekhet Niddah,* in Chaim M. Horovitz, *Tosefta 'Atiqta* pt. 5 (Frankfurt a. Main, 1890). Cf. S. Schechter "Jewish Literature in 1890," *JQR* o.s. 3 (1891): 338–42; N. Brüll, *Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* (Frankfurt: Wilhelm Erras, 1876), 124–26; Saul Lieberman, *Sheqi'in* (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1970), 22, and idem, in *Sefer Metivot,* ed. B. Lewin (Jerusalem, 1934; reprint, Jerusalem: Maqor, 1973), 115–18. See also the sources listed in note above.

[66] *Ma'aseh Yafeh shel R. Yishma'el Kohen Gadol,* in Horowitz, *Tosefta 'Atiqta,* 5:57–61, from *Liqquṭe ha-Pardes,* attributed to Rashi (Amsterdam, 1715), fol. 4a; see also Horowitz, *Tosefta 'Atiqta,* 5:44–45 and his list of versions of the story, 4:14. Cf. Micha J. bin Gorion, *Mimekor Yisrael,* ed. Emanuel bin Gorion, trans. I. M. Lask (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 2:547 and the sources listed in 3:1506 n. 5. A version of the story appears in the Apocalypse of the Ten Martyrs. See Reeg, *Zehn Martyren,* 56. Another version of this story appears in the late medieval *Ma'aseh-buch.* See Moses Gaster, *Ma'aseh Book: Book of Jewish Tales and Legends Translated from the Judeo-German* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1934), 237–39. For a recent discussion of this tale, including parallels and newly discovered manuscripts relevant to Hekhalot literature, see Wolfson, *Speculum That Shines,* 212–14.

bathhouse and immersed. When she emerged, she saw a leper before her. She went back and immersed."[67] After forty such instances, The Holy One, Blessed be He instructs Gabriel to tell her that she has more than proven her piety (in fact, that she has gone too far) and that she would be rewarded with little Ishmael. According to halakhah, contact with a live pig does not produce impurity—nor, as we have seen, does the mere sight of anything defiling. But there are numerous examples of the belief that looking at a particular kind of animal or person—especially a menstruating woman—can affect one physically.[68] B. Pes. 111a states that if a woman at the beginning of her period passes before two men, she will kill one of them.[69] We need not presume that the authors of the Sar-Torah texts knew these texts, although they may be contemporary with some of this literature. Rather, both genres reflect popular notions that each uses to its purpose.

Ablutions and Cleansing

Ablutions accompany the regimen at some point in the rituals. These are explicitly designated as purificatory rituals. Section 299 instructs the reader to "wash his garments and cloaks and perform a stringent immersion rendering him free from any doubt of nocturnal pollution." Note here the requirement to wash one's clothes, which was also commanded at Sinai in Exod. 19:10 and 14. In the Great Name ritual (§489) the practitioner must wear white garments; in the Sar-Torah ritual in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (§560) he is not to look at colored fabric. In a few texts the ablution is to take place at a river.[70] As Gruenwald and Moshe Idel have pointed

[67] Horovitz, *Tosefta 'Atiqta,* 5:57.

[68] See b. Shab. 129b, which warns that encountering a pig (*davar aḥer*) after bloodletting can lead to leprosy (Rashi, ad. loc., cites b. Qid. 49b that of the ten measures of skin afflictions [*nega'im*] that descended to the world, nine were taken by pigs). The legend in Gaster, *Ma'aseh Book,* is associated with the statement in b. Ber. 20a that R. Yoḥanan would stand outside the women's bathhouse so that the women would have children as handsome as he; the reasoning behind this version of the story is thus that if Rabbi Ishmael's mother had seen a pig, she would be thinking of it when she conceives. See Moses Gaster, *The Exempla of the Rabbis,* (1924; reprint, New York: Ktav, 1968), 145–46, 102, and 222. Cf. Num. R. chapter 9. In contrast, the purpose of the versions quoted by Horowitz is to demonstrate the merits of ritual immersion, which removes those harmful effects. As Cohen observes ("Purity and Piety," 108), *Braita de-Massekhet Niddah* stresses the physical dangers of menstruation, contrary to the prevailing rabbinic conception.

[69] The comment in *Tosafot* ad loc. moderates this statement by explaining that if she had practiced witchcraft on him (*kishuf*), the power of her impurity will make it effective. According to b. Shab. 110b, a woman can repel a snake by telling it she is in menstruation; cf. Rashi, ad loc. On these and other examples of the idea of the destructive power of the menstruant see Dinari, "*Ṭum'at ha-Niddah,*" 311.

[70] See §§489, 495, and 663.

out, the river was known as a place of numinous encounter for Ezekiel and Jacob, and as the setting for many magical procedures.[71]

With the Angels

What is at stake in these elaborate procedures? Why must the human being undergo such an extraordinary level of purification in order to meet with the angels? We may locate a clue to this question in another set of texts relevant to our understanding of the role of purity in these rituals: rabbinic legends regarding rivalry between humans and angels, particularly those that concern Moses' ascent to heaven to receive the Torah.[72] It is open to question whether the Moses stories constituted the sole or even the principal source for the Sar-Torah genre and the Hekhalot tradition in general.[73] But many details of these stories are relevant to this discussion of purity and ascesis in those literatures.

The *locus classicus* for the ascent of Moses is in the Babylonian Talmud, b. Shab. 88b–89a. Important versions of this myth are also found in early medieval midrashim such as *Pesiqta Rabbati*.[74] In the talmudic version, the angels protest to God about Moses' presence among them to receive the Torah, asking, "What is one born of woman doing here among us?" In *Pesiqta Rabbati,* chapter 20, an angel accuses Moses directly: "You have come from a place of filth to a pure place; you born of woman, what are you doing in a place of fire?"[75]

The angels' disparagement of Moses as one "born of woman" reminds

[71] See Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 135; Moshe Idel, "*Le-Gilgulehah shel Ṭekhniqah Qedumah shel Ḥazon Nevu'i Bi-yeme ha-Benayim,*" *Sinai* 86 (1979–80): 1–7; Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "Tashlik: A Study in Jewish Ceremonies," *HUCA* 11 (1936): 207–340; and Wolfson, *Speculum That Shines,* 238–41; cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 212.

[72] See Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism;* Joseph P. Schultz, "Angelic Opposition to the Ascension of Moses and the Revelation of the Law," *JQR* 61 (1970–71): 282–307; Moshe Idel, "*Tefisat ha-Torah*"; Peter Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1975); and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot.*

[73] Cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot.*

[74] In particular, *Pesiqta Rabbati,* ed. Meir Ish Shalom (Vienna, 1880; reprint, Israel, n.d.), 96b–98a (chap. 20); *Midrash Tehillim,* ed. S. Buber (Vilna, 1891; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1966), 73–76 (chap. 8); *Pirqe de-Rabbi 'Eliezer* (Warsaw, 1852; reprint, Jerusalem, n.d.), 110b (chap. 46). See the sources listed in L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1946), 6:46–47; Schultz, "Angelic Opposition," 286–87; and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 289–322. A frequently cited source is *Ma'ayan Ḥokhmah,* in Jellinek, *Bet Ha-Midrash,* 1:58–61, which is in fact the introduction to the magical book *Shimmushe Torah;* see the discussion in Chapter 7 below and the sources cited there.

[75] *Pesiqta Rabbati,* 96b.

him of his origins in impurity according to Leviticus 12.[76] In the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah, the angel Yofiel, rebuking Rabbi Ishmael, addresses him as "human being, son of a stinking drop, worm and vermin."[77] In *Seder 'Eliahu Zuta,* the angels are contrasted with the human worshipper, who "eats and excretes like an animal."[78] A particularly offensive property of human beings is their smell. In one passage, Metatron disturbs the heavenly hosts, who demand to know why the smell of this being "born of woman" is rising up to them.[79] This unit is a brief tradition appended to *Hekhalot Rabbati* at §§147–49 in one manuscript and to the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah at §§315–17 in another.[80] It is probably a late tradition and may reflect the idea, which forms the basis for the narrative of 3 Enoch, that Metatron was once the earthling Enoch. Ablutions in the Sar-Torah rituals may therefore have the purpose not only of ridding the practitioner of ritual impurity, but of odors; so too the prohibitions of garlic and other foods that may cause bad breath and indigestion.[81]

But in these cases, the angels are not simply expressing contempt at the physical obnoxiousness of the human intruder; they are apparently concerned that he will pollute the angelic domain. Thus extraordinary purification is necessary to approach their abode in heaven. In the same way, the individual who seeks to bring the angel to earth must not repulse him with his impurity.

These midrashim depict Moses as undergoing a process of extraordinary purification in preparation for the revelation at Sinai. In b. Yoma 4a, Rabbi Natan interprets Exodus 24:16 to mean that the cloud covered Moses at Sinai in order to purge food and drink from his bowels, "to make him like

[76] This epithet is also used by angels in 3 Enoch §§3, 9, 79, and 149, discussed below. On this term, taken from Job 14:1 and 15:14, see Ginzberg, *Legends,* 6:57, and Schultz, "Angelic Opposition," 287.

[77] §313; cf. also §§79 and 565. This term is based on m. Avot 3:1, where humans are admonished to remember that we come from a stinking drop and go to a place of worm and vermin. For an interpretation of the saying in Avot see Saul Lieberman, "How much Greek in Jewish Palestine?" in *Biblical and Other Studies,* ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 136–39. On repugnance to semen in ancient Judaism see David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 45 and 247 n. 69.

[78] *Seder 'Eliahu Zuta,* chap. 12, in *Seder 'Eliahu Rabbah ve-Seder 'Eliahu Zuta,* ed. Meir Ish Shalom (Vienna, 1904; reprint, Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1969), 193. For the phrase cf. b. Yoma 75b, where God also declares that in giving Israel manna, which did not need to be eliminated, he wished to make them like the ministering angels.

[79] See also §181, discussed below.

[80] The unit appears in MS. MY 8128 at §§147–49 and in MS. Vatican 228 at 315–317. Both of these manuscripts tend to include later material not found in other Hekhalot manuscripts. On MS. NY 8128 see Schäfer, *Synopse,* p. x, and Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 43–44.

[81] Conversely, it is a characteristic of the righteous that they emit no bad odor. Cf. the story of Rabbi Eleazer in b. B. Meṣ. 83a–85a, on which see Boyarin, "Literary Fat Rabbis."

the ministering angels."[82] It is a matter of debate, in b. Yoma 75b, for example, whether or not angels eat.[83] Visitors likewise do not eat, but rather, like the righteous according to Berakhot 17a, are "nourished by the splendor of the Shekhinah."[84] In some sources the angels (and humans in their presence) eat a particular kind of heavenly food.[85] This idea may bear on the special preparations of bread found in some of our rituals.

The notion that in order to be among the divine beings it is necessary to assume a state of ritual parity with them is an ancient idea that finds expression in this midrash and in the Hekhalot literature. According to Gary A. Anderson, Gilgamesh's friend Enkidu would be able to walk about in the netherworld unnoticed if he refrained from the joyous activities—like those proscribed in rabbinic literature in mourning and atonement—that distinguish the living.[86] This would appear to be behind the necromantic fasting of the rabbis mentioned above. Likewise, in order to be indistinguishable from the angels, Moses must be empty of food. In *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* the ruse works too well. The Sar-Torah practitioner must protect himself by standing in a circle so that "the demons will not come and liken him to the angels and kill him" (§562).[87]

Moses wins the argument with the angels by citing the very physicality of humanity which was the grounds for their objections in the first place. That physicality is what permits human beings to observe the Torah. In b. Shab. 88b he points out: "It is written, 'honor your father and mother' [Exod. 20:12 and Deut. 5:16]; do you have mothers and fathers?" This argument can be seen as a clever refutation of the epithet *yelud 'ishah,* "born of woman." In the Midrash to Psalms, God cites the laws of impurity, which the pure angels cannot observe.[88]

The angels, however, are not always depicted as creatures of pure spirit, impervious to the quasi-physical properties of matter that necessitate these procedures in the first place. Rather, they can merely afford to be more

[82] This view is opposed by Mattiah ben Ḥeresh. See also *'Avot de-Rabbi Natan,* ed. Schechter, version A, chap. 1.

[83] The discussion centers on the exegesis of Deut. 9:9 vs. Ps. 78:25. According to Lev. R. 34:8, Targum Ps.-Jonathan to Gen. 18:8, and one opinion in b. B. Meṣ. 86b, the three angels who visited Abraham were only pretending to eat and drink. For the sources on this subject see David Goodman, "Do Angels Eat?" *JJS* 37 (1986): 160–75.

[84] Cf. Lev. R. 20:10 and parallels, referring to Moses and Aaron at Sinai according to Exod. 24:11. See further Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism,* 74–87.

[85] Based on Exod. 24:11 and Ps. 78:25, and often related to the manna in the wilderness. See Goodman, "Do Angels Eat?," 160–62.

[86] Anderson, *Time to Mourn,* 75–76.

[87] On the protective device of standing in a circle, which is used by Ḥoni ha-Ma'agel in m. Ta'an. 3:8, see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 185.

[88] *Midrash Tehillim,* ed. Buber, chap. 8, pp. 74–75. See also Schultz, "Angelic Opposition," 286–87, 300–301.

fastidious. A particularly striking passage in a cosmological text, *Seder Rabbah de-Bereshit,* illustrates the idea that the angels themselves are not exempt from the ritual dynamics that allow the human practitioner to be in their presence.[89] This passage describes the protocol of the heavenly liturgy, and particularly its dependence on the earthly liturgy of Israel.[90] The heavenly chorus must wait for Israel on earth to recite the *qedushah* (Isa. 6:6) before they can recite theirs. How do they know when Israel has done so on earth? There is an angel named Shemu'el who stands every day at dawn and announces the prayers that rise from the synagogues and houses of study. When he does so, the angels immerse themselves in rivers of fire. At this point the text asks a perfectly reasonable question:

> (§181) And do the angels have flux [*zov*] and pollution, menstrual impurity [*niddah*], and [impurity of] childbirth, that they require immersion? Rather, [those who immerse are] the angels who are appointed over the labor of the world and descend every day to bring peace to the world—when the time comes for song, they go up to the firmament and because of the smell of human beings who are born of woman, possessors of impurity, possessors of flux and filth, they bathe themselves in fire and cleanse and purify and lustrate . . . themselves in fire until they make themselves holy, and they become like the ministering angels of the upper firmament [*'aravot raqia'*].

The susceptibility to pollution on the part of the angels is not merely an esoteric notion, confined to the phenomenological fringes of Jewish religious history. It is an echo of a significant aspect of biblical cultic theology: the volatility of the divine presence in biblical religion. As described by Baruch A. Levine,[91] the Potent Presence of God required extremely delicate sanitary conditions to appear on earth; if these conditions were not met, the Deity had no choice but to react. It is this volatility that triggers the divine wrath against misguided intruders like Nadav and Avihu in Lev. 10:1–2. As Moses' subsequent consolation of Aaron demonstrates (Lev. 10:3), that wrath is less an emotional response to sin than a manifestation of God's holiness.[92]

It is in this context that we can understand a common motif in both the conjuration and ascent literatures: the wrath of the angels. We can see this motif in the Sar-Torah's rebuke of Rabbi Ishmael, but it manifests itself in the ritual itself. Repeatedly, the practitioner adjures them not to harm

[89] *Synopse* §§790–91, MS. Oxf. 1531 and §§810–11 in the same manuscript (=§§180–81 in MS. NY 8128).

[90] On the correspondence between the heavenly and earthly liturgy see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer;* Schäfer, "Aim and Purpose"; and Gruenwald, "Angelic Songs, the Qedushah and the Problem of the Origin of the Hekhalot Literature," in *Apocalyptism,* 145–73.

[91] Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of The Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

[92] See Levine, *Leviticus,* 59–60.

him.[93] The motif of the danger of the encounter with the divine beings determines much of the ritual dynamics manifest in these texts. The angels personify the impersonal wrath of the Potent Presence in reaction to invasion of its pure realm.

The Deposition of Rabbi Neḥuniah

The ascent to the heavens and esoteric system of ritual purity are placed in striking conjunction in the story of Rabbi Neḥuniah's deposition from heaven in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (§§225–28). This passage, which has prompted considerable discussion in recent years, is the principal source for understanding the relationship of cultic purity with the idea of ascent to the Merkavah.[94]

The setting of the story is the Temple in Jerusalem. Rabbi Neḥuniah is seated reciting the details of his ascent in the midst of his disciples. In order to ask their rabbi about a cryptic term he is using, his colleagues must bring him down from heaven. However, they must do so without causing him harm or sin. They thus employ an elaborate procedure in which a piece of fine cloth is touched by a woman who has completed her cycle, has immersed unsuccessfully, once, and has then immersed correctly.[95] This woman would be impure only according to one of the sages. This cloth is placed on a bough of myrtle soaked in balsam oil and placed on Rabbi Neḥuniah's knees. This has the effect of deposing him from before the heavenly throne.

For Scholem,[96] this story was proof of "the halakhic character of Hekhalot mysticism" and thus of its derivation from rabbinic circles. It is the passage in Hekhalot literature that bears the strongest affinities to rabbinic halakhah. However, it is more purely a narrative text than the prescriptive texts in our selection that concern a ritual undertaken by a rabbi.[97] The

[93] See, for example, §§558 (on which see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 132–33), 569, and 624.

[94] Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 9–13; Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Recall of Rabbi Neḥunia ben ha-Qanah from Ecstasy in the 'Hekhalot Rabbati,'" *AJS Review* 1 (1976): 269–81; Saul Lieberman, "The Knowledge of *Halakha* by the Author (or Authors) of the *Heikhaloth,*" in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 241–44; and Margarete Schlüter, "Die Erzählung von der Rückholung des R. Neḥunya ben Haqana aus der *Merkava*-Schau in ihrem redaktionellen Rahmen," *FJB* 10 (1982): 65–109.

[95] In b. Nid. 67a, the term *lo' 'altah lah ṭevilah* refers to an immersion invalidated by an interposing substance. See Schiffman, "Rabbi Neḥuniah," 274; Lieberman, "Knowledge of *Halakha,*" 243.

[96] Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 9.

[97] Unlike many of the ritual texts under discussion, this one does not contain a recommendation for the praxis in which the tradent or an angel testifies to its effectiveness for

procedure—indeed Rabbi Neḥuniah's entire ascent—is presented by the narrative as a one-time occurrence undertaken in an emergency.[98]

The basic objective of the procedure is to render Rabbi Neḥuniah impure so that he will be cast down from heaven. Each of the steps taken have as their purpose the infusion of the cloth with a marginal degree of impurity. The woman is at a stage in her cycle, after she has immersed a first time, in which her purity is probable but not certain. Rabbi Neḥuniah would then be made impure only in the opinion of a minority of sages.[99] But, as Lieberman points out, in heaven the minority view with regard to purity prevails.[100] The colleagues' solution was particularly ingenious, for it allowed them to bring him down without violating his earthly purity on the Temple mount. Thus interpreted, this procedure underscores the cultic dynamics of the ascent as conceived by the authors of *Hekhalot Rabbati:* there are higher standards of ritual purity in heaven, but the function of purity is the same as in the biblical cult. Purity is a prerequisite for approaching the Potent Presence of God.

Notwithstanding the story's obvious halakhic dimension, there are factors mitigating against the argument that the story proves that the authors of the Hekhalot literature were the same rabbis responsible for the classical Talmuds and midrashim. One is that the halakhah is one but not the sole component of the ritual. As Schiffman and Schlüter point out, there is also a significant magical dimension to the praxis. This does not itself indicate nonrabbinic provenance, but it does suggest that the authors had other considerations in mind.[101] More significantly, the halakhah on which they do rely is nonstandard. As Schlüter observes, the position of its authors is extrahalakhic.[102]

In fact, according to current scholarship on the subject, the Pharisaic and rabbinic purity systems deemphasized the cultic and localized nature

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everybody regardless of status. Such a recommendation occurs, for example, in §305, in which the narrative stresses that the Sar-Torah praxis is effective for the lowliest shepherd and is as potent outside of the land of Israel than within its boundaries.

[98] The ascent is also undertaken because of an emergency: Rome's evil decree against Israel. Furthermore, Schlüter's textual analysis ("Erzählung," 84–95) shows that the account of Rabbi Nehuniah's deposition is a later addition to this section of *Hekhalot Rabbati.*

[99] Lieberman, "Knowledge of *Halakha,*" 242, suggests that the minority would include Rabbi Eliezer, who was known to take a stricter position on purity.

[100] Ibid. The myrtle branch dipped in balsam would serve to disguise the odor of the cloth according to Lieberman, or, in Schiffman's view, act as a magic wand that would likewise affect the deposition and reinforce the action.

[101] Schiffman, "Recall," 275–81; Schlüter, "Erzählung," 107.

[102] Schlüter, "Erzählung," 108–9.

of the biblical concept of purity.[103] In the early rabbinic system, purity was no longer the sole property of those who needed to approach the divine presence in the Temple, but a duty of all Israel. This story, by contrast, reinforces the cultic notion. The presence is not, however, localized on Zion, but in the heavenly Temple.[104]

Conclusions

Rituals in Hekhalot literature have largely been interpreted according to the assumption that their principal meaning can be found in the intention to produce a mystical state. It is certainly not difficult to imagine that the individual who follows these procedures might achieve a vision of the angel he wishes to conjure, or of the heavenly array. But if we make this idea the primary vehicle for interpreting these practices, we miss much of their significance. This analysis has shown that rituals in Hekhalot literature reflect distinct ritual goals and can be read within the context of the traditional and mythic worlds of their time.

As the Sar-Torah practitioner sees it, he must prepare for an encounter with divine beings who are sensitive to terrestrial pollution and are easily provoked. Taking as his initial model his ancestors' approach to the divine presence at Sinai and Zion, he then seeks to rid himself of all physical traces of his humanness through ritual purification using techniques drawn from halakhah, Jewish folk beliefs, and Greco-Roman magic. The foregoing analysis suggests that it is this conception, no less than the consciousness of the individual, that influences the details of these ritual procedures.

[103] See especially Neusner, *Purities;* idem, *The Idea of Purity;* and Baruch M. Bokser, "Approaching Sacred Space," *HTR* 78 (1985): 279–99.

[104] To be sure, many passages in rabbinic literature can be found that do reflect this older concept. See for example, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan,* chap. 34 and A. Aptowitzer, "*Bet ha-Miqdash shel Ma'alah 'al Pi ha-'Aggadah,*" *Tarbiṣ* 2 (1931): 137–53 and 257–87. Cf. also Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 28–29.

Chapter 7

TRADITION AND AUTHORITY

IN THANKING God for imparting His magical secrets to Israel, the Sar-Torah hymn in *Merkavah Rabbah* (§676) employs a distinctive literary form. The hymn praises God as the revealer of mysteries "to Moses, and Moses to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the *Ḥasidim*, and the *Ḥasidim* to the Fearers of the Name,[1] and the Fearers of the Name to the men of the Great Assembly, and the men of the Great Assembly . . . to all Israel."

These lines are based on one of the most famous passages in all of rabbinic literature: the opening of the Mishnah tractate Avot, known as the chain of tradition, which enumerates the stages in transmission of the Torah from Moses to the rabbinic sages. This text is often seen as a manifesto of rabbinic Judaism. The Sar-Torah hymn's affinity with and divergence from Avot underscore an important tension in the Sar-Torah texts and in Hekhalot literature in general.

We have seen that the Sar-Torah stories and practices were deeply bound up with the rabbinic ethos of the study of Torah. Sar-Torah rituals also used biblical and rabbinic legal and ritual patterns for their own purposes. Nevertheless, there are indications that the authors of these texts were not identical with those who produced the classical works of the rabbinic canon. They drew from other sources, including magical literature and popular religion, for narrative and ritual patterns. They thus recognized the validity of the rabbinic system, but stood somewhat apart from its priorities and concerns.

In this chapter, the issue of the complex relationship between the Sar-Torah literature and rabbinic Judaism is further defined through an examination of an important set of patterns in Hekhalot and magical literature: a set of literary genres that apply tradition, authority, and ideal figures to the purpose of validating the magic or mystical practice of the text. These motifs can tell us much about how their authors saw themselves and their place in society. This discussion goes beyond the specifics of the Sar-Torah tradition, toward our understanding of the social context of Hekhalot and cognate literatures.

[1] MS. NY 8128: *yir'e shamayim*, "Fearers of Heaven."

Tradition and Magic

In his essay *Magic, Science, and Religion,* Bronislaw Malinowski makes the following observation concerning the relationship of tradition and magic: "Tradition . . . gathers in great abundance round magical ritual and cult. In the case of any important magic we invariably find the story accounting for its existence. Such a story tells when and where it entered the possession of man, how it became the property of a local group, or of a family or clan. Magic never "originated," it has never been made or invented. . . . The spell, the rite, and the thing which they govern are coeval."[2]

These remarks follow shortly after another set of observations regarding tradition and particularly its transmission in religion in general. According to Malinowski, "The transmission and conservation of sacred tradition entails publicity." In order to assure belief, the society requires assurance that its truths are "held in safekeeping, handed on exactly as received. . . . Every religion must have its tangible, reliable safeguards by which the authenticity of its tradition is guaranteed."[3] Malinowski's comments have an interesting relevance to the study of early Jewish mysticism and magic. His latter remarks regarding religion and transmission are cited in Gerson Cohen's introduction to Ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah.*[4] Cohen, in the course of describing Islamic and rabbinic precedents to ibn Daud's historiography, emphasizes the validating function of the rabbinic "chain of tradition" motif, most prominent in Avot and Avot de-Rabbi Natan: "For a practice to be ritually valid," he observes, "it had to be supported by tradition." Cohen cites Malinowski in order to make the point that the Muslim interest in validating attestation (*isnad*) need not have been a product of Jewish influence, since such interests exist in every civilization, which "preserves or fabricates some genealogical attestation of the families and/or traditions which it seeks to legitimate."[5]

If, as Cohen implies, Malinowski's observations regarding religious cultures in general have their counterpart in the rabbinic chain of tradition and its heirs, his statements regarding magical traditions have their counterpart as well in the literature of Jewish magic and mysticism of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. These literatures carry with them their own genres of validating myths authenticating their practices and magical devices. Several of these, in fact, are directly related to the rabbinic chain of tradition and can tell us about both.

[2] Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion,* 74–75.

[3] Ibid., 67–68.

[4] Gerson Cohen, *A Critical Edition with a Translation and Notes of the Book of Tradition (Sefer ha-Qabbalah) by Abraham Ibn Daud* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967), p. li n. 36.

[5] Ibid.

Tradition and authority are expressed in Hekhalot and magical literatures in specific literary forms. This chapter will focus on two of these. One is a variant on the chain of tradition, in which the text testifies that the magical ritual, divine name, or book of magic was handed down through a succession of ideal figures to be available to the practitioner. The other, related, motif concerns the power of the magical book or mystical tract and is found in introductions and testimonies attached to Hekhalot texts and magical books.

Historical and Theoretical Considerations

An important model for this inquiry is provided by Hans Dieter Betz in his analysis of the role of tradition in Greco-Roman magical literature.[6] There he notes that as the magical practitioner functions as an individual,[7] one might be surprised to find magicians striving consciously to define their tradition. Like Malinowski, Betz observes that since "no magician who is worth his reputation would ever claim to have invented or made up his own spells,"[8] he is thus reliant on a concept of tradition. The authors of the magical texts address this need through self-definition, systematization, and the devising of myths regarding the origins and transmission of their magic.

Corresponding examples of this tendency can easily be found in Jewish magical texts, particularly in the motifs we shall examine regarding the succession of ideal figures who first received and preserved the magical tradition. Hekhalot and Sar-Torah texts, too, strive to define their tradition in similar ways, principally by means of pseudepigraphic attribution of texts to great rabbis, and through such validating techniques as the chains of tradition and testimonies analyzed here.

The Chain of Tradition Motif

It is generally understood that the chains of tradition in Hekhalot literature are based on the model in Avot. Therefore, we will map affinities and contrasts in the ethos, operating principles, and historical implications of the variations on this form in Hekhalot and magical texts in comparison to the rabbinic prototype.

[6] Hans Dieter Betz, "The Formation of Authoritative Tradition in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition,* ed. Ben F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 3: 161–70.

[7] On this aspect of the social position of the magician, see Emil Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 59–60.

[8] Betz, "Authoritative Tradition," 162.

In Rabbinic Literature

The paradigmatic rabbinic chain of tradition occurs at the beginning of m. Avot, and, with minor variations, in the two principal recensions of Avot de-Rabbi Natan.[9] Although related passages appear in rabbinic literature, they have not been as influential.[10]

The first chapter of m. Avot is generally acknowledged to be one of the most important texts for our understanding of the nature of early rabbinic Judaism. It presents what is considered to be the principal validating myth of rabbinism: that the Torah given to Moses at Sinai was handed down to the elders and prophets of biblical Israel, through Second Temple groups considered to be the intellectual and political forerunners of the Pharisees and rabbis, and to the rabbis themselves: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and handed it down to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly." As the chain progresses in both Avot and Avot de-Rabbi Natan, it takes the form of lemmata affixed to rabbinic maxims, extending forward through the early generations of the tannaim.[11]

This myth embodies several important concepts. It is a dramatic illustration of the idea of tradition. Revelation is not given anew to each sage or generation, but has come to Israel from Moses through the mediation of the succession of masters and disciples. Yet the Torah is not simply a document passed from one pair of hands to another. It is associated with a process by which the Torah's wisdom is elaborated by each successive generation.[12] In the first mishnah of Avot, the initial list of tradents culminates

[9] For a table illustrating the variations between versions of the chain, see Anthony Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism: A Literary Study of the Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 68–69. It is commonly understood that the versions in the two rescensions of *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* derive from a separate recension of Avot from that contained in our mishnah. See Judah Goldin, *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), xix–xx; J. N. Epstein, *Mevo'ot le-Sifrut ha-Tanna'im* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1957), 232–33; and Lerner, "The External Tractates," 370–71.

[10] See, for example, y. Sanh. 10:1 (28a) and parallels, on which see n. below.

[11] There appear to be two conclusions to this chain in Avot. While 1:16–2:7 extends from Hillel and Shammai through the Patriarchs, 2:8–16 ends with the disciples of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* arranges the patriarchal succession independently of the disciples of Yoḥanan. See Anthony Saldarini, "The End of the Rabbinic Chain of Tradition," *JBL* 93 (1974): 97–106.

[12] Cf. y. Sanh. 10:1 (28a) (cf. Eccl. R. 12:11) which, quoting m. Avot 1:1, likens the Torah to a "girls' ball" or "shuttlecock" tossed from one player's hands to another's. See William G. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 61–62 n. 7. By use of Eccl. 12:11 as the prooftext, the midrash equates the Torah with the "words of the sages."

in the Men of the Great Assembly.[13] At this point the text introduces the sayings of that body and continues with statements of two of its members, Simon the Just and Antigonos of Sokho. From here on, Chapters 1 and 2 consist of statements of the individuals who received the tradition. According to Steven Fraade, this device, by which each teacher "adds one or more teachings to what he has received," serves to emphasize that the texts of rabbinic literature "not only transmit received traditions form an earlier time, but simultaneously and often subtly transform—for purposes of their own place and program in time—what they seek to transmit."[14]

The myth is also significant for its social and political implications. Priests and Davidic kings, who ruled Israel for most of its history before 70 CE, do not appear as clearly defined groups.[15] The sages and their predecessors thus displace these groups as authorities.[16]

The rabbinic chain of tradition itself is not without its antecedents. Elias Bickerman, Henry Fischel, Anthony Saldarini, and others have shown that the chain of tradition motif must be placed within the context of Greco-Roman scholastic rhetoric. From Homer to the Cynics, authority of a class and authenticity of an intellectual process has been validated by the use of specific literary forms that depict the origins and stage-by-stage transmission of the tradition through a sequence of scholars or rulers.[17] This cultural factor is relevant to our exploration of the trajectory of this motif

[13] On this group see below.

[14] Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 69–70. According to Jacob Neusner, *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 56, Avot equates Torah with the sayings of the sages; this equation "*is a fact validated by the association of what they say with their own names*" (italics in the original). Solomon Schechter (*Avot de-Rabbi Natan* [London/Vienna/Frankfort, 1887], p. xxiv) provides an interesting rationale for the chain of tradition: "There is no suggestion of any of the words of this tractate in Scripture at all, and if they were not supported by the reception of these tradents [*qabbalat ha-meqablim*], they would be floating in the air."

[15] This is the case, although individuals in the chain, such as Simeon the Just, were themselves supposed to have been priests. On Simeon's place in the chain see Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 18–19. Moreover, the Hillelite dynasty and through them the Patriarchs claimed Davidic ancestry.

[16] According to Louis Finkelstein, *Mavo' le-Massekhtot 'Avot ve-'Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950), xxix, the early authorities "claimed for themselves equal, and not sole, authority" with that of the priests. On the place of the priesthood in this conception in contrast to its influence in Pharisaic and rabbinic history see Fraade, *Tradition,* 70–71 and 232.

[17] Élie Bickerman, "La chaîne de la tradition pharisienne," *RB* 59 (1952); 44–54, reprinted in *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature,* ed. Henry A. Fischel (New York: Ktav, 1977), 127–37; Fischel, "Sorites" (on the Homeric example see n. below); Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism.*

in Hekhalot and magical literatures. Even if instances of this pattern in Hekhalot literature are based on the Avot tradition, its importance for the authors was probably reinforced by its currency in the wider Mediterranean culture.

The Chain of Tradition in Hekhalot Literature

In Hekhalot literature, chains of tradition occur in four passages. This discussion will proceed with an analysis of the literary context of these texts. Then, after a brief assessment of some of their historical implications, their meaning within the esoteric traditions will be explored.

The four passages can be separated into two groups. The first group consists of a passage that appears in a few manuscripts at the end of 3 Enoch (§80), and a related passage that appears with *Shi'ur Qomah* in various manuscripts (§724=397=474). Both seem to be appendixes and are not integral to the central concerns of 3 Enoch or *Shi'ur Qomah.* The second group consists of a hymn found, with variations, in *Merkavah Rabbah* and *Ma'aseh Merkavah.*

3 ENOCH

The first passage we will examine was published by H. Odeberg as chapter 48D of *3 Enoch*[18] and in the *Synopse* as §80.[19] It appears in an independent collection of traditions (§§71–80) concerning the "seventy names of Metatron," which was appended to 3 Enoch.[20] It is likely that some, if not all, components of the collection originated in the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba.[21] In §79, the angels voice their opposition to the presence of Meta-

[18] Hugo Odeberg, *3 Enoch, or the Hebrew Book of Enoch,* 2nd ed. (New York: Ktav, 1973), 74 (in the Hebrew text) and 178–79 (English text). See also the translation of Alexander, "3 Enoch," 315.

[19] Among the manuscripts in the *Synopse,* the passage only appears in MSS. Munich 22 (M22) and Vatican 228 (V228). According to Schafer, "Handschriften," 194 and 197, the passage also appears in Oxford MSS. 1656 and 2872; in the latter manuscript it appears in the framework of the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba. The same recension of 3 Enoch seems to appear in MS. NY 1737. See Schäfer, "Handschriften," 222 and 225–28.

[20] See Odeberg, *3 Enoch,* 172–79, Alexander, "3 Enoch," 224–25, 310–15; and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 417–20. This collection of traditions consists of three principal units: §§71–75 (Odeberg, chs. 48B and C), an abbreviated account of Enoch's transformation, the core of which is §§71–72 (§§937–38); §§76–77 (Odeberg, chap. 48D; cf. §§387–88), in which a list of the seventy names is followed by an account of how the Sar-Torah Yefefiyah bestowed a forgetful Moses with Torah on Mt. Sinai; and §§78–80 (the latter half of Odeberg's ch. 48D), which depicts the angels' objection to Metatron's presence and concludes with the chain of tradition under discussion. Halperin (*Faces of the Chariot,* 417), refers to §§76–80 as the "Moses/Metaron text." On the tradition of seventy names, see Dan, "The Seventy Names of Metatron."

[21] The texts of the two recensions of the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba are printed in Jellinek,

tron, who is the transformed Enoch, among them. In §80, God answers their objection by declaring that to Metatron alone among the angels has he entrusted the secrets or names.[22] He continues:

> "And Metatron may take them[23] out of My storehouse." And he handed[24] them to Moses, and Moses to Joshua, and from Joshua to the Elders, and from the Elders to the prophets, and from the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly and from the men of the Great Assembly to Ezra the Scribe and from Ezra the Scribe to Hillel the Elder, and [from] Hillel to R. Abbahu and from R. Abbahu to R. Zeira, and from R. Zeira to the Men of Faith, and from the Men of Faith to the Possessors of Faith,[25] to be circumspect with it and to heal all the diseases that are widespread in the world. As it is said, "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and will do what is right in His eyes, and will listen to his commandments, and keep all His statutes, all the diseases that I have put upon the Egyptians I will not put on you, for I am the Lord who heals you" [Exod. 15:26].

Metatron brings down secrets and names to the earth over the objection of the angels. He does so through the agency of Moses. This text follows the pattern of the legends of the angelic opposition to Moses' reception of the Torah.[26] It proceeds after the pattern of the transmission of Torah through the chain of tradition. However, in this case the object of the transmission is not the Torah itself, but magical names designated for the purpose of healing. Healing is one of the most important functions of magical names in amulets.[27] In addition, Moses' reception of Torah is

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Bet Ha-Midrash 3:12–64; and Wertheimer, *Bate Midrashot,* 2:333–418. On this text see K. Kohler, "Akiba ben Joseph, Alphabet of," *JE* 1:310–311. Paragraphs §§71–72 of 3 Enoch preserve the acrostic structure of the alphabet, indicating that they originated there. But the subsequent passages may be independent.

[22] It is not clear from the text exactly what it was that God imparted to Metatron. The passage may be referring to the secret (*raz*), mentioned earlier in the text, by which the heaven and earth were created.

[23] Referring, perhaps, to divine names.

[24] Reading *wmsr,* with MS. V228. MS. M22 has *wmwsrw,* "and he [may] hand it." In the previous clause, V228 has the participle *moṣi'* ("he [may] take"), and the verb is lacking in MS. M22. Thus it is difficult to tell whether this is a resumption of the narrative in the past tense, or a continuation of God's speech. Cf. Alexander's translation, "3 Enoch," 315.

[25] Alexander, "3 Enoch," 315, renders this term as "faithful."

[26] Alexander, "3 Enoch," 315, Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 419–20. On the pattern cf. Chapter 6 above; Schultz, "Angelic Opposition;" and Schäfer, *Rivalität.*

[27] See Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 46–47. The association of Exod. 15:26 with magical healing is well attested in rabbinic and magical sources. Cf. m. Sanh. 10:1 prohibiting its recitation for magical purposes, on which see Judah Goldin, "The Magic of Magic and Superstition," in *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature,* ed. B. Eichler and J. Tigay (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 341–46, and the sources cited in Odeberg, *3 Enoch,* 179 (Odeberg's citation of *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* should read *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A chap. 27). That verse is in fact used in this way in several magical texts; for an

related to his acquisition of esoteric secrets of healing in rabbinic Moses legends such as b. Shab. 89a and Chapter 20 of Pesiqta Rabbati. As Halperin shows, the idea that Moses brought down not only the Torah but secrets of healing is based on an exegesis of Ps. 68:19 found in several midrashim.[28] In these midrashim, the angels, whose opposition has been overcome by Moses, present him with the "gifts" mentioned in Ps. 68:19. These include a gift of healing from the Angel of Death, who teaches him how to heal the plague in Num. 17:11–13.[29]

The chain of tradition from 3 Enoch is not alone in connecting this midrashic tradition with the secrets contained in the text itself. In a related story of Moses' ascent published by A. Jellinek as *Ma'ayan Ḥokhmah,*[30] the angels passed on their secrets in the following way:

> And every one of them handed to him a spell[31] for healing and a secret of names, the use of which derive from each and every verse, for thus it states, "You went up to the heights, you took captives; you took gifts for humanity" [Ps. 68:19]. And even the Angel of Death handed a spell to him, for thus it is written, "He put on the incense and made expiation for the people; [he stood between the dead and the living and the plague was checked"] [Num. 17:11–13]. This is the honored [magical] procedure [*shimmush*] that the angels handed down through Yefefiyah, the Prince of Torah, and through Metatron, Prince of the Presence and handed it down to Moses, to Eleazar, and Eleazar to Phinehas, his son, who is Elijah, the great and dear priest, remembered for good. Amen.

As Gershom Scholem has noted, this "midrash" is the introduction to a medieval book known as *Shimmushe Torah,* which concerns the derivation of magical names from verses of the Torah.[32] This fact is a key to under-

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ancient Palestinian example see Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magical Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity,* 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987), Amulet 13, pp. 98–99; cf. their Genizah 8 (TS K1.137), pp. 239–40, also published in Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 131–36.

[28] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 301–5. See also Alexander, "3 Enoch," 315, n. w.

[29] In b. Shab. 89a and *Pesiqta Rabbati* chap. 20, ed. M. Friedman, 98a (also edited critically in K-E. Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr, Dein Gott! Eine rabbinische Homilie zum Ersten Gebot (PesR 20)* [Bern: Herbert Lang and Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1976], 297), the angel of death tells Moses to stand between the dead and the living. In *Pirqe de-Rabbi 'Eliezer* chap. 46 the angels give him healing amulets (*'igrot u-fetaqim shel-refu'ot*); see Gerald Friedlander, *Pirḳê de-Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: Hermon Press, 1965), 362 n. 4; see also *Midrash ha-Gadol,* ed. M. Margulies (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1947), 2:395–96. On the relationship of these sources, see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 303.

[30] Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 1:58–61. See also Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 291–307; cf. n. 32 below.

[31] On this meaning of *davar* in Hekhalot literature see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 185.

[32] Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), 20; idem, *Pirqe Yesod be-Qabbalah ve-Simleha* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1976), 41; idem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Sym-*

standing its use of the Moses myth. The author or compiler has found a particular way to link Moses' revelation of Torah at Sinai with the idea that he also acquired names for healing. He does so by introducing the notion that the revelation included the techniques (*shimmush*) for deriving magical names from the written Torah.[33] The last sentence indicates that these are the very magical names and techniques contained in the book that it introduces. This method of employing legends concerning the transmission of esoteric tradition is characteristic of introductions to magical books.[34]

The 3 Enoch chain and the introduction to *Shimmushe Torah* are thus two examples of how the theme of Moses' reception of Torah and its subsequent transmission serves purposes that go beyond the process of study and law. That tradition is marshaled for the practical purposes of healing and magical practice.

SHI'UR QOMAH

Related to the 3 Enoch chain in complex ways is a passage found with *Shi'ur Qomah* materials in several manuscripts of Hekhalot literature. The passage appears in a collection of archangel traditions extending from §§730–§39 in MSS. Oxf. 1531 and M40, §§393–402 in MS. NY 8128, and §§470–79 in MS. M22.[35] Principally these concern a chief angel who is designated with the title "youth,"[36] and identified as Metatron.

The section begins at §730 with a lengthy magical prayer for recitation of divine names, in which the practitioner entreats that the demons (*mazi-*

bolism, 38; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives,* 396 n. 75. See, for example MS. NY JTSA 8120, fols. 6a–19a. The story was also printed in *Yalquṭ Reuveni;* see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 291; cf. also Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash,* 1:xviii.

[33] On such techniques see Idel, "*Tefisat ha-Torah.*"

[34] Note too that this passage also contains a brief chain of tradition, but that unlike those of the rabbinic and Hekhalot literatures, this is a priestly chain. On the priesthood in Hekhalot literature, see I. Gruenwald, "*Meqoman shel Mesorot Kohaniot be-Yeṣiratah shel ha-Mistiqah shel ha-Merkavah ve-shel Shi'ur Qomah,*" *Meḥqere Yerushalayim be-Maḥshevet Yisrael* 1 (1981–82), 65–120 (Hebrew section) and idem, *Apocalyptism,* 125–44.

[35] MS. M22's version of the text is also published in Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions,* 198–204. In MS. NY 8128 this collection is preceded by §§375–92, another group of Metatron traditions in a similar sequence. On the parallels between the two groups, see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 491–94. In the other three manuscripts the collection is preceded by *Seder Rabbah de-Bereshit* materials (§§715–27) and introduced by two testimonies regarding the recitation of the *Shi'ur Qomah* (§§728 and 729). It is likely that the redactor of the first sequence in MS. NY 8128 created it by supplementing these two introductory paragraphs with other *Shi'ur Qomah*/Metatron traditions. On the tendency to expansion in MS. NY 8128, see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 43–44. The translation provided below is based on MS. Oxf. 1531, supplemented principally by MS. M22. On the usefulness of these two manuscripts, see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 59–60.

[36] On this title see Scholem, *Major Trends,* 49–50, Saul Lieberman in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 238–39, and Haperin, *Faces of the Chariot.*

qim) not harm him while he is reciting the names. This is followed by a long list of divine names and numinous descriptions of God. The description of the "youth" begins at §733. There it is stated that the angel was "given[37] not to Adam, nor to Shem, nor to Abraham, nor to Isaac, nor to Jacob, but to Moses alone."[38] This passage constitutes what can be called a negative chain of tradition, in which the figures who will not receive the secret are enumerated. The implications of this form are examined below.

In §734, this angel is identified as Yofiel,[39] also known as Yehariel,[40] also known as Metatron. A mysterious name follows, which is said in an Aramaic gloss to have been spelled out on the Divine crown.[41] The passage continues:

> This is His great name, which was handed down to Moses at Sinai by God, faithful and humble,[42] and from the mouth of Moses it was handed down to Joshua, and from Joshua to the Elders, and from the Elders to the prophets, and from the prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly and from the Men of the Great Assembly to Ezra and from Ezra to Hillel and from Hillel it was concealed until R. Abbahu came along and said, "This is My name forever" (Exod. 3:15).

Here, as in the 3 Enoch chain, divine names, which are identified also as angelic names, are described as having been handed down at Sinai, through the chain of tradition. Here Metatron is not represented as the transformed Enoch who imparts secrets to Moses, but as the archangel whose name is like his Master's.[43] To learn his names, therefore, is to learn the names of God. R. Abbahu's utterance of Exod. 3:15 constitutes an identification of the name that God designated as His own at Horeb with the divine names in our text. This passage, however, unlike the others, contains no explicit clause telling the purpose of this name.[44]

[37] That is, permission was given to make use of his name. See Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah,* 236.

[38] On this passage see Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah,* 236–37. As Cohen points out, the idea that the name was not given to the patriarchs is based on Exod. 3:13 and 6:3.

[39] MS. M22 reads *yzby'l,* probably a corruption of Yofiel.

[40] MS. M40: *yhdry'l.* MS. M22: *yhdy'l.*

[41] MS. Oxf. 1531: *d'l tg' mprš.* MS. M22: *m'l.*

[42] These adjectives probably refer to Moses. Cf. Num. 12:3, 7.

[43] B. Sanh. 38b, 3 Enoch §5; see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 41. For the use of this idea in an amulet, see TS K1.168, in Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 147, 157. Cf. also Gruenwald, "*Qeṭa'im,*" in which a portion of God's name is given to the angel.

[44] The name includes the word *lrp't,* which Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 425, takes to be an echo of the tradition discussed above that Moses received magical names for healing at Sinai.

The chain is identical to the 3 Enoch chain until Hillel. At that point it is stated that the secret was hidden until R. Abbahu came along. This interesting detail may arise from a chronological problem. Several generations separated the first-century Hillel from Rabbi Abbahu of the third-fourth century. This gap is not noted in the 3 Enoch chain, but in this passage it is explained by the statement that the name was hidden away for the latter. As we shall see, this idea plays a role in the text's affirmation of its validity and power.

Following this passage, the text continues with an elaborate account of Metatron's exaltation before God. It should be noted that the preceding paragraph, §733, which contains the "negative chain of tradition," and §736, which follows shortly after, appear together in what is known as the *Sefer ha-Qomah* recension of the *Shi'ur Qomah*,[45] as §960 and §961, but without §§734–35, which contains our chain of tradition. Although these Metatron traditions are particularly prone to shifting, this placement raises the possibility that §§734–35 was inserted into a previously existing unit that consisted of §733 and §736. If this is so, a redactor would have appended §734 to §733 because of its affinities with the "negative chain" in that paragraph. Its purpose would be to account for how, if it was only given to Moses, the tradition eventually arrived at the hands of its more recent tradents.

MERKAVAH RABBAH AND *MA'ASEH MERKAVAH*

As we have seen, a chain of tradition appears in the opening hymn in *Merkavah Rabbah* and, in shorter form, in *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.[46] In *Merkavah Rabbah* the passage follows the story of Rabbi Akiba's ascent found in *Hekhalot Zutarti* (§§673–74=346–47) and precedes a *Merkavah Rabbah*'s version of the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah.

This hymn, which is translated above in Chapter 4, is introduced at §675 by Rabbi Ishmael's testimony concerning the benefits of "reciting this mystery" (*raz*). He will, among other things, possess this world and the world to come and receive the face of the Divine Presence. The "mystery" consists of instructions to recite the hymn with all one's heart and to guard against all sin, so that God will be with one at all times.

The hymn praises the enthroned God who dwells in the exalted Hekhal as the revealer of secrets. The chain, which adds the *Ḥasidim* and the Fearers of the Name,[47] proclaims that the mysteries are revealed to all Israel so that they can "engage in Torah with them, and increase study

[45] On this recension see Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah: Texts and Recensions*, 6–10.

[46] On the relationship of these two sources see the discussion in Chapter 4 and the studies cited there.

[47] See the previous note.

[*talmud*] with them." In *Ma'aseh Merkavah*'s abbreviated version, the hymn serves the purpose of introducing *Ma'aseh Merkavah* as a composite text that encompasses the themes of ascent and acquisition of Torah.[48] There the same basic components appear as in *Merkavah Rabbah,* but without the elaborate chain: God revealed the secrets to Moses and he revealed them directly to Israel.

In neither version is the pericope containing the hymn an integral part of a larger text. In *Merkavah Rabbah,* §675 follows a unit found in *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* to which it bears no thematic relationship. It precedes the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah, but is not a part of that composition. In *Ma'aseh Merkavah* the passage containing the hymn was added later to serve as an introduction to that text.

However, this hymn, in both versions, is directly related to the function of the Sar-Torah practices that it introduces. Mysteries, consisting of ritual procedures and divine names, are revealed through the tradition so that anyone can gain the prodigious skill in memorization and learning that the angel of the Torah provides. Moses, then, not only revealed the Torah itself, but the magical means to learn it. The scholastic succession in the chain of tradition thus takes on a particular relevance in this case. The sages' success in transmitting Torah can be ascribed to these esoteric practices. Moreover, the same practices are available to all Israel—directly, as in *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* or in *Merkavah Rabbah,* through the chain of tradition.

Because of its function as representing the transmission of the magic of the Sar-Torah, these texts come closest to integrating the function of the classical chain of tradition with the magical version of the same. In our previous examples, magical secrets are plainly grafted onto the myth of revelation of Torah at Sinai; that is, they say that while Moses was on the mountain, he also received curative magic. In the Sar-Torah version of the chain of tradition, Moses and his successors receive magic in the service of the Torah they impart.

SUMMARY

In the following table the components of these chains of tradition are compared with those of the opening chapters of Avot and Avot de-Rabbi Natan.[49]

[48] It is possible, as Schäfer suggests (*Übersetung* 3:xxxi), that the first and final paragraphs of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (§§544 and 596) serve as "redaktionelle Klämmer" added by a later redactor.

[49] For our purposes, when the Avot and *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* chains are considered together they will be referred to as the "Avot tradition."

TABLE 3
Chains of Tradition

	'Avot			Hekhalot	
M. Avot	*ARNA*	*ARNB*	*§675 (MR)*	*§734 (SQ)*	*§80 3E*
					Metatron
Moses	Moses	Moses	Moses	Moses	Moses
Joshua	Joshua	Joshua	Joshua	Joshua	Joshua
Elders	Elders	Elders	Elders	Elders	Elders
—	—	Judges	—	—	—
Prophets	Prophets	Prophets	Prophets	Prophets	Prophets
—	HZ&M	HZ&M	—	—	—
—	—	—	Ḥasidim	—	—
—	—	—	F. Name	—	—
GA	GA	GA	GA	GA	GA
—	—	—		Ezra	Ezra
(. . .)	(. . .)	(. . .)		—	—
Hillel and	Hillel and	Hillel and		Hillel	Hillel
Shammai	Shammai	Shammai		—	—
(. . .)	(. . .)	(. . .)		R. Abbahu	R. Abbahu
					R. Zeira
					Men of Faith
					Faithful
			Israel		

F. Name = Fearers of the Name HZ&M = Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi
GA = Men of the Great Assembly

This table brings several significant details into relief. The Judges appear in both recensions of Avot de-Rabbi Natan but not in the Hekhalot chains. This is an indication that the latter traditions are based on Avot or its source and not Avot de-Rabbi Natan. Nor are the Pairs (*zugot*) of early authorities significant in the Hekhalot texts.[50] The last sage from the Avot tradition to appear in the Hekhalot chains is Hillel. Shammai, the Patriarchs, and the students of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai are absent.[51] Conversely,

[50] It is possible, however, that the pairing of Zeira with Abbahu in 3 Enoch is an echo of this tendency; in the same way, perhaps, Rabbis Akiba and Ishmael are often paired together in Hekhalot literature.

[51] Indeed, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai seldom appears in Hekhalot literature despite the depiction of him as an adept interpreter of the Merkavah in t. Ḥag. 2:1–2. Note too that Rabbis Akiba and Ishmael are also missing here. In fact, the one "chain of tradition" in rabbinic literature that could be construed mystically produces only a faint echo in Hekhalot literature, if at all. A statement appears in t. Ḥag. 2:2 concerning Merkavah exegesis that "Rabbi Joshua lectured before R. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, Rabbi Akiba lectured before Rabbi Joshua, Ḥaninah ben Ḥakhinai lectured before Rabbi Akiba." A fragmentary Genizah text (Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, G21 [TS K21.95A], fol. 1b, lines 10–12) reads: "Rabbi Eliezer expounds

the Amoraim Abbahu and Zeira do not appear in the Avot tradition. The Hekhalot chains also add groups unknown to rabbinic historiography. These are discussed below.

THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION

Although the primary focus of this discussion is on the function of this motif in the rhetoric and phenomenology of these texts, it is useful to comment on some of the more immediate historical implications of these passages. It is unlikely that their details will provide us with reliable direct evidence of the origins and identity of the early Jewish mystics. However, they do raise some interesting historiographic questions.

These passages contain obvious anachronisms and chronological gaps. Ezra is placed after the Men of the Great Assembly in contrast to the rabbinic tradition.[52] The interval mentioned above between Hillel and Abbahu is a difficulty that may have been addressed by the author of the *Shi'ur Qomah* chain. However, Hekhalot texts often contain anachronisms far more serious than this. In the narrative of *Hekhalot Rabbati* rabbis appear together who were hardly contemporaries.[53] It is possible that this tendency is a product of a certain kind of mystical consciousness, as Joseph Dan suggests.[54] However, it may reflect a lack of access on the part of the authors to more reliable chronological sources.[55] In any case, it is clear

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[*doresh*] the Merkavah, Rabbi Akiba searches [*mefallesh*] the Merkav[ah, Ḥaninah ben] Ḥakhinai reports [*mesapper*] the Merkavah," and so on. On the Tosefta passage see Halperin, *Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature,* 84–86.

[52] Much has been written about the Great Assembly (or Great Synagogue); it has been debated whether it constituted an actual institution. Sources and bibliography on the Great Assembly are analyzed in Ira Jeffery Schiffer, "The Men of the Great Assembly," in *Persons and Institutions in Early Rabbinic Judaism,* ed. William S. Green (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 237–76; see the literature cited there; cf. H. Mantel, *Anshe Kenneset ha-Gedolah* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1983).

[53] See Joseph Dan, "*Tefisat ha-Historiah be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ve-ha-Merkavah,*" in *Be-'Orah Mada': Meḥqarim be-Tarbut Yisra'el Mugashim le-'Aharon Mirsky,* ed. Zvi Malachi (Lod: Makhon Haberman, 1986), 117–29, translated and adapted as "The Concept of History in Hekhalot and Merkabah Literature," in *Binah: Studies in Jewish History, Thought, and Culture,* ed. J. Dan (New York: Praeger, 1988), 1: 47–57. Just as striking is the presence of Rabbi Ishmael, designated "high priest," in the Temple according to that story. See Dan, "*Tefisat ha-Historiah,*" 123; cf. b. Ber. 7a, on which see Scholem, *Major Trends,* 356 n. 3.

[54] Dan, *Tefisat ha-Historiah.*

[55] Dan's assertion (*Tefisat ha-Historiah*) that the authors must have been aware of the subtleties of rabbinic chronology and chose to ignore them is based largely on Scholem's argument (*Gnosticism,* 9–13) for the halakhic character of the story of Rabbi Neḥuniah's removal from heaven in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §§221–24; cf. Schiffman, "Recall of Rabbi Neḥunia," and S. Lieberman in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 241–44. However, this characteristic does not prove conclusively that the authors were privy to in-house historiographic traditions of the academy, but only that they looked to rabbinic halakhah for purity rituals. Cf.

that the interest of the authors is not historiographic. More important to them is the need to provide supernatural origins and hallowed precedents for their magic.

To this end, groups of spiritual ancestors play an important part in these chains. The Elders, Prophets, and the Men of the Great Assembly appear in all of them, as they do in Avot and Avot de-Rabbi Natan. The *Merkavah Rabbah* chain also includes *ḥasidim,* who are mentioned in rabbinic sources but not in the rabbinic chains. Also notable is the presence of other mysterious groups in two of the chains: Men of Faith, (*'anshe 'amanah*), Possessors of Faith (*ba'ale 'emunah*), and Fearers of the Name (*yir'e hashem*).

The term *ḥasidim* can have several meanings in rabbinic literature. It is unclear whether it refers to a clearly defined group or sect. It can refer to a group of saints who observed moral law to an extraordinary level, a type of wonder-worker with miraculous powers, or simply a particular type of religious personality distinguished by exceptional piety.[56] The term *'anshe 'amanah* appears in m. Soṭah 9:12 as one of a series of things and persons that ceased when the Temple was destroyed.[57] In y. Soṭah 9:14 (24b) the latter are identified as those who occupy themselves with the study of Torah at the expense of business pursuits. In b. Soṭah 48b the Gemara explains the term as referring to those pious ones who do not ask where their next meal will come from. These sources are notable because they appear among enumerations of the extraordinary phenomena and pious men that characterized the periods of the First and Second Temples. These constitute, if not a miraculous chain, then a series that extends down through history to the rabbinic period.[58] The inclusion of the category *'anshe 'amanah* in these texts may have inspired the authors of the Hekhalot chains to include this term in constructing their list of precursors.

Margarete Schlüter's observation that the ritual in the story is extrahalakhic: "Erzählung," 108, and chapter 6 above.

[56] On the term *ḥasid* see Louis Jacobs, "The Concept of Ḥasid in the Biblical and Rabbinic Literatures," *JJS* 8 (1957): 143–54. The relationship between the term *ḥasidim* in rabbinic literature and the group of that name depicted in the books of Maccabees (1 Macc. 2:42, 7:13; 2 Macc. 14:6) as participants in the revolt is uncertain, as is their identification with the Essenes. For a survey of the sources and an analysis of the problem see S. Safrai, "The Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," *JJS* 16 (1965): 15–33.

[57] The prooftext given is Ps. 12:2, "Help, O YHWH, for the pious [*ḥasid*] are no more; the faithful [*'emunim*] have vanished from among human beings."

[58] See especially t. Soṭah 15, enumerating the traits of rabbis: "When ben Azzai died, the conscientious ceased; when ben Zoma died, interpreters ceased," etc.; and b. Soṭah 48b, in which the prophets and sages who made use of the heavenly voice (*bat qol*) are listed. In b. Soṭah 47b this motif is in fact transformed into a "catastrophic sorite" in a narration of the stages of deterioration of Second Temple society. Cf. Fischel, "Sorites," 129–32.

The term *ba'ale 'emunah* appears among synonyms for groups of mystics in a hymn in *Hekhalot Rabbati*. The structure of the hymn links a divine attribute with the group praising God and their act of praise:

> You are faithful [*ne'eman*] in your word;
> All possessors of faith [*ba'ale 'emunah*]
> trust [*ma'aminim*] in you.[59]

The hymn includes a similar stanza employing the term *ḥasid*. The term *ba'ale 'emunah* thus refers there not to a specific historical group, but to classes of worshippers called up for the purposes of the hymn's structure.[60] Moreover, qualities such as faithfulness and piety are often mentioned as prerequisites for the Merkavah or Sar-Torah praxis. In a text such as ours, which places importance on tradition and historical antecedents for its claims to effectiveness, such designations could easily be imagined as referring to definite historical groups who transmitted the tradition. Thus it is likely that these terms refer either to the mystics themselves, or, perhaps, mythic ancestors patterned after Elders and the Men of the Great Assembly and influenced by the appearance of terms such as *'anshe 'amanah* in talmudic literature. The inclusion of such groups would serve to emphasize that the tradition could only be carried on by men known for piety and holiness.[61]

The inclusion of Rabbi Abbahu and his colleague Zeira in the 3 Enoch and *Shi'ur Qomah* chains is puzzling. Abbahu is known in talmudic tradition as an important economic and political figure in Palestine, particularly in Caesarea. He was also known for philosophical and exegetical disputations with heretics and non-Jewish thinkers.[62] However, he does not figure prominently in Hekhalot literature. This leads Halperin to suggest a Caesarean provenance for this tradition.[63] Salo Baron, commenting on the

[59] On this hymn and its structure see J. Maier, "'Attāh Hû' 'Ādôn (Hekhalot rabbati XXVI, 5)," *Judaica* 21 (1965): 129–33.

[60] Cf. the other examples of such epithets cited in Alexander, "3 Enoch," 315, n. w.

[61] On such prerequisites, see Uchelen, "Ethical Terminology." There may seem to be a contradiction between the requirement that the practitioner be morally blameless and the instrumentality of the name or praxis (see below), by which it functions independently of the moral status of the practitioner. This question is addressed in *Hekhalot Rabbati* §201, in which Rabbi Ishmael expresses despair at the possibility of achieving such a moral level upon hearing Rabbi Neḥuniah's enumeration of those requirements; the latter answers by showing him the technique which is effective for anyone. See further below on esotericism and exotericism in these literatures.

[62] See especially Lee I. Levine, "Rabbi Abbahu of Caesarea," in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 4:56–76; and idem, *Caesarea under Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 75–78. In Gen. R. 6:6 a cosmological tradition regarding the dimension of the second firmament is taught in his name. On related Abbahu traditions see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 160–61.

[63] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 259.

3 Enoch version of the chain, points out that references to an Abbahu appear in the Aramaic magical bowls.[64] It is unclear whether this is our Abbahu or simply another name like Abraxas. But bowls refer enigmatically to another rabbi, Joshua ben Peraḥia, in a similar way.[65] It is possible that inclusion of Rabbi Abbahu reflects some lost legend that traveled, say, to Babylonia from Palestine.

Variations and Their Implications

When we compare the versions of the chain of tradition within the Hekhalot corpus itself, we can see interesting differences, corresponding to certain features of the texts into which they are set. As noted above, the *Merkavah Rabbah* and *Ma'aseh Merkavah* versions emphasize the value of the secrets revealed from Moses to Israel for the magical acquisition of Torah. This is consistent with both texts. In *Merkavah Rabbah* adjurations of the Sar-Torah and the Sar ha-Panim figure prominently. The redaction of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* combines ascent and Sar-Torah sections. These two chains of tradition do not mention named rabbinic authorities. In the *Ma'aseh Merkavah* version the secrets are transferred directly from Moses to Israel; in *Merkavah Rabbah* the precursors to the rabbis are listed but no rabbis themselves. This is notable in light of the implications of the Sar-Torah tradition: that the learning of the rabbis can be acquired though magical means.

By contrast, the 3 Enoch and *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions are more specific in listing individual rabbinic authorities: *Shi'ur Qomah* includes Hillel, one of the acknowledged founders of rabbinic Judaism, and R. Abbahu; and 3 Enoch extends this to Zeira. In the case of 3 Enoch, this is in keeping with a tendency of that text. 3 Enoch incorporates many disparate elements, encompassing apocalyptic, pietistic, and cosmological strands. Moreover, 3 Enoch displays affinities to late rabbinic terminology and thought not characteristic of most other Hekhalot texts.[66] Thus its rabbinizing tendency is reflected in the greater detail of its chain of tradition. So too, the *Shi'ur Qomah,* while not as traditional in theological concep-

[64] Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958), 8: 21; see also there p. 283 n. 20. Baron cites James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, The Museum, 1913), text 7, p. 145; the text is also found in Isbell, *Corpus of Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975), Text Three, p. 21.

[65] On Joshua ben Peraḥia in the bowls see Neusner, *Babylonia,* 5:235–43.

[66] As Peter Schäfer observes (*Hidden and Manifest God,* 123), "In comparison to the other Hekhalot texts the conception of God in 3 Enoch is strikingly traditional."

tion, does depict Rabbi Nathan as the student of Rabbi Ishmael in keeping with rabbinic literature and unlike other Hekhalot texts.[67]

The Chain of Tradition in Hekhalot Literature: Observations

If these passages do not present a historically accurate picture of their nature and origins, we can learn more from their literary features. The "chain of tradition" motif is a literary *topos* which seems to appear independent of any given immediate narrative or liturgical context. It can appear in a cosmological text, instruction for an incantation, magical book, or hymn.

As described above, the chain of tradition in Avot is interspersed with the sayings of individual sages, thus signifying that the Torah they transmit is a process carried on actively by these persons. In contrast, no such elaboration of the list of names can occur in our traditions because the tradents cannot add to the divine name or praxis. It must be recited or performed exactly as handed down to Moses by God or Metatron. The charisma of the tradition is thus not invested in the individuals who pass it on and honor it with their wisdom and acuity, but in a potent name, act, or book. The degree of contrast varies between texts within the corpora; for example, there is a greater emphasis on the role of the rabbis in the 3 Enoch and *Shi'ur Qomah* versions.

Nevertheless, what is significant to the chains of tradition in Hekhalot literature is that while they use the rabbinic chain of tradition as a model, 197two essential differences occur: (1) the magical name, praxis, or text is substituted for the process of Torah; and (2) the chain culminates not in the succession of latter-day rabbis down to the present day, but in the conclusion that these names and secrets are available to "all Israel" (*Merkavah Rabbah*) or at least, as in 3 Enoch, to the faithful practitioners who will use it for Israel's benefit.

Validation in Magical Books

These two essential features of the Hekhalot chains of tradition are also characteristic of Jewish magical texts. The emphasis on the potent divine name is one of the most prominent features of Jewish magic. Magical texts also claim to be effective for anyone who uses them regardless of social status. These affinities are made strikingly manifest in patterns of validation in magical texts, in which similar motifs serve to recommend the rituals and esoteric names contained in them. These patterns are found principally in introductions to magical books and represent interesting

[67] See Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 86–87.

variations of the motifs described above. Examining how they are used in magical texts will help us understand how the dynamics of ritual power and esotericism operate in these two literatures, and tell us something about the affinities between them.

These distinctive features, moreover, are most evident in passages concerning the transmission not only of a powerful name, but of a specific book. As the book functions not only as a repository of wisdom or revelation, but as a physical object, it is particularly emblematic of the tensions described here. Investigation of this theme will then lead to a consideration of the role of the book in the Hekhalot and magical traditions.

The Magical Chain of Tradition

Another type of chain of tradition occurs in the introductions to magical books found in the Genizah and other collections. Introductions to magical texts are among the most common features of such handbooks and constitute a distinct genre. At least two such introductions were published independently by Jellinek as "minor midrashim": *Ma'ayan Ḥokhmah,* cited above, and the so-called *Sefer Noaḥ* described below.[68]

The most prominent of these introductions appears in *Sefer ha-Razim,* an early handbook of magic pieced together from Genizah fragments and other medieval manuscripts by M. Margalioth.[69] Although the extent to which *Sefer ha-Razim* is a unitary work is open to question,[70] its introduction is a good example of this form and goes back at least to the early Middle Ages.[71] It was printed in the popular medieval anthology *Sefer Raziel* and is related to a series of stories that appear elsewhere in that compilation.

The introduction to *Sefer ha-Razim* begins as follows: "This is one of the books of the mysteries that was given to Noah son of Lamech son of

[68] For examples of the relationship between midrash and magical texts, see below. Baron (*History,* 8:278) remarks in reference to the Hekhalot texts that "the line of demarcation between these mystic tracts and supernaturally oriented midrashim is often extremely tenuous."

[69] Mordechai Margalioth, *Sefer Ha-Razim: Hu' Sefer Keshafim mi-Tequfat ha-Talmud* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966).

[70] See Hans Niggemeyer, *Beschworungsformeln aus dem "Buch der Geheimnisse"* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1975); Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction," 15. Cf. P. S. Alexander, "Incantations and Books of Magic," in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,* rev. and ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Goodman (Edinburgh: Clark, 1986), 3.1:349.

[71] According to Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim,* 47–49, and Niggemeyer, *Beschwörungsformeln,* 12–14, the introduction is attested in two of the Genizah fragments collected by Margalioth and partially in a third, and appears in several codices. *Sefer ha-Razim* was dated by Margalioth to the third century; Gruenwald (*Apocalyptic,* 226) suggests a sixth-century date for the work.

Methuselah son of Enoch son of Jared son of Mehalalel son of Kenan son of Enosh son of Seth son of Adam, by the angel Raziel in the year when he came to the ark before he entered."[72] The text goes on to relate how the book was written with a sapphire and how Noah used the book to perform wonders, to know astrology and healing, and to fashion the ark out of gopher wood and to get the animals into it. When Noah died, "he gave it to Abraham and from Abraham to Isaac and from Isaac to Jacob and from Jacob to Levi and from Levi to Kohath and from Kohath to Amram and from Amram to Moses and from Moses to Joshua and from Joshua to the Elders and from the Elders to the Prophets and from the Prophets to the Sages and so to every generation until Solomon arose to be enlightened by many books of wisdom . . . for many books were handed down to him, but he found this most precious and honored and enduring [*qasheh*] of all."[73]

The text goes on to praise itself extravagantly. Unlike the chains of tradition in Hekhalot literature, *Sefer ha-Razim*'s does not begin with Moses, but with Noah.[74] Noah's lineage is traced back to Adam, and the magical tradition is carried forward through Noah's descendants to Moses.[75] Nor does the chain mention individual rabbis or their Second Temple precursors such as the Men of the Great Assembly. It culminates in Solomon, who was well known as a master of magical and occult wisdom in antiquity.[76]

Solomon is placed in an odd position after prophets and sages. This anachronism may have its origin in redactional considerations. It is possible that the editor of the introduction had two traditions regarding the origin and authority of the book: the Solomon stories and the chain of tradition. In order to accommodate them both, he then structured the introduction so that the chain ended not with the Sages, but with Solomon.[77]

Noah is represented in a variety of sources as a recipient of angelic heal-

[72] Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim,* 65.

[73] Ibid., 66.

[74] Cf. below on the version of this tradition that begins with Adam.

[75] On the genealogical list as a chain of tradition see Fischel, "Sorites," 128–29.

[76] On magical Solomon traditions see D. C. Duling, "Testament of Solomon," in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* 1:935–87, L. Ginzberg, "Asmodeus," *JE* 2:217–20, Michael Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God,* ed. F. Cross, W. E. Lemke, and P. D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 449–50 n. 50; David J. Halperin, "The *Book of Remedies,* the Canonization of the Solomonic Writings, and the Riddle of Pseudo-Eusebius," *JQR* 72 (1982): 269–92, and the sources cited in those articles.

[77] See Michael Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 19 n. 9. The term "sages" (*ḥakhamim*) may refer not to the rabbis but to wise men in general; In *Sefer 'Asaf* (on which see below) the term refers to learned men of all nations. If this is true, the anachronism would be less serious.

ing traditions. The earliest extant is Jubilees 10:10–14, in which the angels teach the secrets of healing to Noah, who writes it down in a book he gives to Shem.[78] A more elaborate version of this story appears in the introduction to the medical book of Asaph the Physician (*Sefer Refu'ah le-'Asaf ha-Rofe'*).[79] The extent to which this work is a cohesive composition is open to question, as well as its dating. Most recently a Byzantine provenance has been argued for the book.[80] The introduction was printed in A. Jellinek's *Bet ha-Midrash* as *Sefer Noah.*[81] There the book is presented as the "Book of Remedies that the early sages copied from the Book of Shem, son of Noah." The text continues with a tale of how, seeing that diseases were

[78] See the translation and notes of James C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Louvain: E. Peeters, 1989), 59–60; on the "Hebrew Book of Noah" cited there see below. There is substantial evidence for rabbinic and early medieval acquaintance for Jubilees and details found in it. See Martha Himmelfarb, "R. Moses the Preacher and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *AJS Review* 9 (1984): 55–78. However, Jubilees need not have been the immediate source for all of the later traditions described below. On the parallels to this introduction see also Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 227.

[79] The most recent and judicious discussion of *Sefer ha-Refu'ot le-'Asaph ha-Rofe'* can be found in Elinor Lieber, "Asaf's *Book of Medicines:* A Hebrew Encyclopedia of Greek and Jewish Medicine, Possibly Compiled in Byzantium on an Indian Model," in *Symposium on Byzantine Medicine, Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38, ed. John Scarborough (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984), 233–49. This unusual work has had a curious history in Jewish scholarship. It has never been published in full, but several scholars have made studies of it: Ludwig Venetianer, *Asaf Judaeus: Der Aelsteste Medicizinische Schriftsteller in Hebraeischer Sprache,* Jahresbericht der Lands-Rabbinerschule in Budapest 38–40 (Budapest, 1915); Suessman Muntner, *Mavo' le-Sefer 'Asaf ha-Rofe'* (Jerusalem: Genizah, 1967); Aviv Melzer, "Asaph the Physician—the Man and his Book: A Historical-Philological Study of the Medical Treatise, The Book of Drugs" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972). In his thesis, Melzer published much of a major manuscript of the text. Lieber states ("Asaf's *Book of Medicines,*" 237) that she is preparing a critical edition, translation, and commentary of the work. With renewed interest in Hebrew literature outside of the rabbinic canon, this text merits attention by historians.

[80] Lieber, "Asaf's *Book of Medicines.*" Muntner argued for a seventh-century dating; see Süssmann Muntner, "The Antiquity of Asaph of the Physician and His Editorship of the Earliest Hebrew Book of Medicine," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 25 (1951), 101–31, for a summary of his arguments. Cf. Melzer, "Asaph," and Shlomo Pines, "The Oath of Asaph the Physician and Yoḥanan ben Zabda: Its Relation to the Hippocratic Oath and the Doctrina Duarum Viarum of the Didachē," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 9 (1976): 251. Melzer's argument for a third-century Babylonian dating has rightly been rejected by Lieber. While earlier scholars considered the work to be pseudepigraphic, Venetianer, Muntner, and Melzer argued that Asaph and his colleague "Yoḥanan son of Zabda ha-Yarḥoni" were in fact the authors of the book, as claimed in the introduction. However, this view is unlikely; see Pines, "Oath," 251, and especially Lieber, "Asaf's *Book of Medicines,*" 237–49. It is still uncertain why the otherwise unknown Asaph was designated as the author.

[81] Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash,* 1:155–56, from MS. Munich Staatsbibliothek 231. See his introduction, xxx–xxxiii and 156 n. 2. The translations presented here are based on Melzer's transcription of the Munich manuscript ("Asaph," 93–95). Jellinek also printed the introductions to *Sefer ha-Razim* and *Sefer Raziel* in the same section; he considered them to be three recensions of the same text. Cf. Margalioth, *Sefer Ha-Razim,* 59–60.

widespread in the world, Noah entreated to God. In response, God sent Raphael, one of the Angels of the Presence, to teach Noah the secrets of extracting cures from plants.[82] Noah wrote these techniques down and gave the book to Shem, who passed it on to the sages of the world. Here the text tells of a remarkably wide process of transmission: "The knowledge of medicine increased in the earth among all the nations who studied medical books: among the sages of India, the sages of Macedonia, the sages of Egypt. . . . And their knowledge increased until a certain Asclepius[83] arose, from the sages of Macedonia."

The text goes on to relate how Asclepius and forty wizards (*ḥarṭumim*) schooled in the medical books attempted to steal the medicinal trees from Paradise, but were repulsed by the flaming sword. As a consequence of this hubris, medical wisdom was lost until the days of King Artahashta (Artaxerxes): "In his days there arose a discerning and wise man learned in the knowledge of medical books and understanding of every matter, and his name was Hippocrates the Macedonian."[84] Thus, in this account, all books of medicine in the world derive from one book, the Book of Shem, which the reader now holds.[85]

Several features in this introduction recall the introductions to magical books and chains of tradition under study here. The story of the sages who attempted to steal the Tree of Life provides an etiology for the idea discussed above in the esoteric chains of tradition that the secret was hidden away until a certain sage, presumably the more proximate founder of the tradition, recovered it. An interesting variation on the motif in this case is its international nature. The originator of the tradition was Noah, the father of all nations (although it was written down by Shem), and it was recovered not by a Jewish sage, but a Greek. From Hippocrates, however, it finally fell into the hands of "Asaph the Jew."

The similarities of this text to the introduction to *Sefer ha-Razim* go beyond this use of the figure of Noah. *Sefer ha-Razim* also follows a similar pattern with regard to the fate of the angelic book.[86] It was handed down by an angel to the primordial hero, used to great practical benefit in a

[82] Obviously, the selection of Raphael for this role is due to his name, derived from the root *rp'*. On the relationship between angelic names and their function in magical lore see Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 34–35.

[83] Heb. *'Asqlepianos.*

[84] Heb. *'ypwqrṭ.*

[85] On these legends see Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews,* 1:154–57 and 5:177 (on the *Sefer Raziel* story); and 1:173–74 and 5:196–97 (on *Jubilees* and *Sefer 'Asaf*), and the sources cited there.

[86] According to Lieber, "Asaf's *Book of Medicine,*" this introduction follows a pattern common to medieval Indian medical encyclopedias in its pseudepigraphic attribution and attestation to the miraculous origins of the book. However, its affinity with magical books should also be taken into account, despite the notable absence of magical elements in the main recensions of the text.

remote "age of miracles," and was hidden away until its discovery by the sage. In these examples the chain of tradition has been applied here not just to a set of secrets or magical names, but to a specific book—the very book the reader now has in his hands. This idea is part of a larger pattern in which history and tradition are placed at the disposal of the individual magician or mystic. Moreover, the text's extension of this motif to the book itself is significant in light of the widespread idea that a physical book can function as a powerful object.

A similar tradition found in later magical books such as *Sefer Raziel,* as well as the Zohar, begins the esoteric tradition with Adam and hints at an exegetical grounding for the idea of the book handed down by God to the first man.[87] These traditions are based on Gen 5:1. The clause *zeh sefer toledot Adam* is taken by some midrashim to mean, "This is the book of generations, [which belongs] to Adam," and to refer to a book in which the fate of all souls yet to be born is written.[88] In some talmudic sources, a contrary view of this verse is taken: "Rabbi Levi said: What is the meaning of the verse, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam?' Did the first man have a book? [Rather,] it teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He showed the first man each generation and its interpreters."[89] This statement could well be a polemic against the idea that an actual book was given to Adam. Compare the following from Gen. R. 24:7: "R. Tanḥuma said in the name of R. Menahem in the name of Rav: The first Adam taught all of the crafts [*'omaniot*]. What is the scriptural evidence for this? *Ve-ḥarashim hemah me-'adam* [Isa. 44:11]: the artisans [*ḥarashim*] received [their craft] from Adam. Our rabbis say: Adam even taught the ruler line of the book, as it is written, 'This is the book'—it and its ruler line."[90]

In the second statement, the crafts of bookmaking are included in the word *sefer* based on the exegesis of Isa. 44:11.[91] Another exegesis of the word *sefer* takes the legend in a somewhat different direction, but to famil-

[87] *Sefer Raziel* (Amsterdam, 1701), fol. 2a, on which see Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim,* xii; cf. Zohar 1:37a-b, 55b and 58b. On these tales see Ginzberg, *Legends* 1:90–93 and 5:117–18 n. 110.

[88] See especially Gen. R. ch. 24:3–4. In Gen. R. 24:5 "the book of the generations" is the Torah itself, which would have been given to Adam had he not disobeyed the few commandments given to him. The Noah story in Genesis also begins *'eleh toledot Noaḥ.* It is possible that the analogy to these legends influenced the image of Noah as a recipient of esoteric books. Cf. a similar analogy based on the word *toledot* drawn in Zohar 1:55b, on which see Daniel C. Matt, *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 216–17.

[89] B. Abod. Zar. 5a; cf. b. Sanh. 38b.

[90] See the variants in Theodor-Albeck, *Bereshit Rabbah,* 1:236.

[91] See n. above. An interesting detail is the use of the phrase *ve-ḥarashim hemah me-'adam* from Isa. 44:11. As the term *ḥarash* also can refer to sorcery, it is possible that some esoteric exegete could have taken it to mean that magicians (*ḥarashim*) learned their craft from Adam (*me-'Adam*).

iar effect. In Pirqe de-Rabbi 'Eliezer chapter 8, *sefer* is related to the verb *spr*, "to count," and taken to refer to the secrets of calculating the calendar.[92] God thus gave the reckoning (*spr*) of the calendar to the generations of Adam (*toledot 'Adam*). He passed it down (*msr*) to Noah, to Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and to Joseph and his brothers. When Joseph died, the secret died too—so too it will diminish in our days until Elijah comes. Here we can recognize the motif of the esoteric chain of tradition, and so too the "negative" form of the motif, asserting that the esoteric tradition was hidden away until the proper time and individual figure comes along.

The Magical Book and the Uses of History

Introductions to magical books attest not only that the book has been passed down through history by ideal figures, but has served an active role in that history. This feature of these introductions provides examples of an interesting interplay between midrash and magic.

In one manuscript of *Hekhalot Zuṭarti*,[93] the text, which contains cosmological and Merkavah traditions, is introduced (§341) as "the book of wisdom and understanding, . . . the treasures of Torah and heaven and earth," which was given to Moses at Horeb. Here the passage echoes a common motif, quite reasonably based on Exod. 3:15: When God proclaimed "this is My name forever," he was referring to the name presented in our text.[94] The notable addition, which also appears in magical handbooks, is that "with it Moses performed the signs and wonders which he performed in Egypt, and by it he smote the Egyptian." The text alludes here to a legend found in midrash that Moses slew the Egyptian by means of a divine name.[95] Unlike the midrashim, however, our passage presents that same name and makes it available to the reader.[96]

[92] That is, the midrash probably vocalizes the word *spr* as *safer*, "counting."

[93] MS. NY 8128.

[94] Cf. the similar use of Exod. 3:15 in the *Shi'ur Qomah* chain quoted above.

[95] On this legend see Lev. R. 32.4, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A chap. 20 (p. 72); Exod. R. 28.2 and 30.2, and *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* chap. 48; from the evidence of *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A and Exod. R. 30.2 it is likely that the midrash is based on the occurrence of the verb *'omer* in Exod. 2:14, which is taken to indicate that Moses spoke (*'amar*) the name and killed the Egyptian. See the sources listed in Avigdor Shinan, *Midrash Shemot-Rabbah Parashot '-y"d* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1984), 89; in Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:405 n. 73; and in Friedlander, *Pirkê de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 379 n. 6. Friedlander cites Clement of Alexandria's report of this legend in the name of *mustai* (*Stromateis*. i. 23); the identity of his informants is obscure. Friedlander's suggestion that this is "probably a Jewish-Hellenistic Midrash" is interesting in light of the exegetical rationale for the legend noted above, which is rooted in the Hebrew. See further Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1985), 118–19.

[96] See also below on the use of a talmudic Joseph legend in an amulet. There would seem to be a chronological problem for our text, as it identifies the name God revealed at Horeb to Moses with the one Moses used to slay the Egyptian: The latter event occurred (Exod. 2:12)

The utility of such a name is made explicit in a fragment of a magical book from the Genizah, which contains, among other things, an incantation "for one who is unsuccessful in business." The text introduces an elaborate divine name in this way:

זה השם הגדול והנורא
שנגלה לאבותנו ובו עשה משה רבנו ע"ה כל האותות
והמופתים וכל מי שיוליך אותו עליו אנו ניזוק לעולם

This is the great and awesome name that was revealed to our fathers and by which Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, performed all the signs and wonders; and anyone who would carry it on [his person] is never harmed.[97]

The text continues with instructions for writing the name on the skin of a deer or white sheep. It would then be worn as an amulet for personal protection.

The theme of a particular person, animal, or object that has passed from one historical episode to the next also figures in midrashic folklore. This motif has been charted by Isaac Heinemann in his classic *Darkhe Ha-Aggadah.*[98] In one example, the garments that were made for Adam and Eve, which had the power to attract animals to anyone who wore them, were obtained by Nimrod, and then by Esau (thus explaining the success of both as hunters). Rebecca finally gave them to Jacob, and he buried them.[99] In another tradition, the staff that was created at the Sabbath eve at twilight according to m. Avot 5:6 was used by Jacob to cross the Jordan; Jacob then gave it to Judah and Tamar, the ancestors of the Messiah; it was then used by Moses and Aaron to perform their miracles, and so on. It now lies buried only to be handed to the Messiah when he comes.[100] In

after the former (Exod. 3:15). Rachel Elior, *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* 62, note to line 28, suggests reading *ḥerev* for *Ḥorev* in light of a parallel to the magical text *Ḥarba' de-Moshe,* the "Sword of Moses" (Moses Gaster, "The Sword of Moses," 3:70 and 1:313), which would eliminate this problem. That is, according to that reading, Moses slew the Egyptian with a "sword"—a magical name like that referred to in the *Ḥarba' de-Moshe.* If this is indeed an error for such a reading, the scribe of that manuscript would have been influenced by the exegeses of Exod. 3:15 cited above. It is possible that our other sources assumed, as did *Peṭirat Moshe* (Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* 1:121), that the name was inscribed on Moses' staff from the beginning. See Fossum, *Name of God,* 118.

[97] MS. TS K1.96, fol. 2a, lines 2–3.

[98] Yitzḥak Heinemann, *Darkhe ha-'Aggadah* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Massada, 1970), 29–32. My thanks to Professor Marc Bregman for bringing this discussion to my attention.

[99] *Pirqe de-Rabbi 'Eliezer,* chap. 24.

[100] *Yalquṭ Shim'oni* 2 (Jerusalem: Levin-Epstein, 1977), to Ps. 110 (*Tehillim,* par. 869). Likewise, in the early medieval apocalypse *Sefer Zerubbabel* (Even-Shemuel, *Midreshe Ge'ulah,* 76–77) and Lévi, "L'apocalypse de Zorobabel," 135, the staff of kingship has been entrusted to the care of Hephzibah, mother of the messiah (cf. Isa. 62:4) to be handed through Elijah to the messiah. Heinemann, *Darkhe ha-'Aggadah,* 30, compares this motif to the scepter of

Heinemann's view, this motif exemplifies the role in aggadic thinking of the transhistorical forces active in the history of Israel. For our practitioners, the motif serves the function of validation and recommendation of the name or book they have in their hands.

The practical consequences of such myths can be seen in amulets from the Cairo Genizah. There, in contrast to the handbooks, these legends are placed at the disposal of specific, named individuals for solving their problems.[101] Amulets often adjure the angels by "the name that was on Aaron's staff."[102] A common form links the desired fate of the client with the fortune of the biblical hero. TS K1.6 quotes Gen. 6:8 to this effect: "'Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord' of Hosts. So may Menashe ben Shamsi find favor in the eyes of all children of Adam and Eve."[103] Another amulet, TS K1.168, employs a well-known talmudic story that Gabriel taught Joseph the seventy languages and added a letter of the divine name to his name.[104] The amulet's innovation is to put that fact to practical use by making that name available to him and his client.

This pattern is not restricted to Jewish magic. Folklorists have found widespread use of what they call the "epic motif" or "historiola" in magical texts.[105] Thomas Sebeok, writing on Cheremis charms, defines this as "an introductory reference of some sort to a past deed by a beneficent power, to whom the rest of the charm is anchored."[106] In Sebeok's example, a symbolic reference to Mt. Calvary functions to assure the client that "human life is secure from evil attack under the protection of Christ."[107]

All of these motifs serve to bring the force of history to bear on the

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Agamemnon in Homer's *Iliad,* 2:100–109; Fischel ("Sorites," 124–26) believes the Homeric pattern to be the origin of the rabbinic chain of tradition; cf. Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism,* 71. It is interesting that this motif is most fully developed in late sources such as the *Yalquṭ* and *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer.*

[101] See Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 23–24, 40–42.

[102] See, for example, TS K1.6 in ibid., 65–68, lines 3–4.

[103] TS K1.6, lines 14–16.

[104] MS. TS K1.168 lines 25–30; cf. b. *Soṭah* 36. See Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 145; on the rabbinic sources, see 156.

[105] For an early definition of the historiola see F. Ohrt, "Segen." On the implications of the historiola form in Greco-Roman magic see David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in Meyer and Mirecki, *Ancient Magic,* 457–76. On the term "magical antecedent" see G. Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation,* trans. J. E. Turner (1938; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967) 2:423–24.

[106] Thomas A. Sebeok, "The Structure and Content of Cheremis Charms," in *Language in Culture and Society: A Reader in Linguistics and Anthropology,* ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 362; Thomas A. Sebeok and Frances J. Ingemann, *Studies in Cheremis: The Supernatural* (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1956; reprint, Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1964), 287–89.

[107] Sebeock and Ingemann, *Studies,* 288.

problem at hand. The authors have taken the charisma of a Joseph, Moses, or Hillel and objectified it. Put in the form of a name or book, it is then made available to anyone with access to it.

Esotericism, Exotericism, and Instrumentality

Validation of the name, book, or technique may come both from claims to its availability and from claims to its exclusiveness. To put this another way, its power can be established in claims both of esotericism and exotericism.

An illustration of a peculiar esoteric claim can be seen in the motif of the "negative chain of tradition." The testimony mentioned above (§733), which precedes the *Shi'ur Qomah* version of the chain of tradition, refers to the angel the adjuration of whom was permitted not to the antediluvian ancestors or patriarchs but to Moses alone. So too, in the following passage (§734), the name must be hidden away until Abbahu comes along.[108] A magical prayer based on the sevenfold amidah known as *Sheva' de-'Eliahu* or *Sheva' Zuṭarti*[109] asserts that a certain divine name was written for Moses, and for no other prophet but Elijah.[110]

This motif can help us understand a paradox in Hekhalot and allied literatures. There is an apparent contradiction between the literatures' claim, on the one hand, that a given tradition was transmitted through the sages to "all Israel" and is therefore available to "everyone" who needs it; and, on the other hand, their emphasis that the text is revealing secrets, hidden things, and mysteries (*setarim, kevushim, razim*). This has given rise in recent years to discussion concerning whether Merkavah mysticism is esoteric or exoteric.[111]

In fact, claims both to esotericism and exotericism in the literature serve to emphasize an essential element of the magic: its instrumental power. The power of the tradition is manifest in the extreme caution and peculiar circumstances in which it must be used. This caution is expressed in elaborate ritual procedures accompanying the use of the name or book, and in the very fact that it was not given to just anybody.[112] This is one reason why the praxis is so often depicted as being dangerous. It is dangerous because it is inherently powerful.

[108] Cf. also the Genizah fragment known as *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* (on which see below) in which a divine name is reserved only for a "certain master [*rav*] in Babylonia."

[109] Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente,* G13 and G14.

[110] Ibid., G14 (TS K21.95.T) fol. 1b lines 13–14.

[111] See Scholem, *Major Trends,* 47; cf. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic,* 122, 144, 170–71. Cf. Ira Chernus, "Individual and Community in the Redaction of the Hekhalot Literature," *HUCA* 52 (1981): 253–74; Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 370, 385–86; and Schäfer, *Hidden and Revealed God,* 157–58.

[112] On the ritual conditions under which the praxis is to be performed, see below.

But because of its instrumentality, the practice in question is valid for everyone, regardless of whether they measure up to the standards of a Moses or a Hillel. This theme is emphasized in the Sar-Torah tradition by a story (§305 in *Hekhalot Rabbati*) in which the effectiveness of the technique of conjuring the Prince of the Torah is tested in the face of doubting rabbis. Rabbi Akiba tests it on simpletons and shepherds and they become his equal in learning.[113]

The Book as Magical Object

This tension between esotericism and exotericism also helps us understand something about the elaborate rituals prescribed in the introductions to magical books and in Sar-Torah traditions. Among the conditions for use of the magical book are ritual purity and a regimen of preparation. Much discussion on this subject has focused on whether these rituals were intended to engender a mystical trance.[114] But their inclusion in these texts has a rhetorical function as well. The instructions for reciting the magical book in purity and sincerity serve to impress on the reader its sacred and powerful qualities.[115] An obscure but interesting Aramaic text in the Hekhalot corpus for recitation of the Great Name (§§489–95) combines an elaborate preparation ritual with warnings of the dire consequences of selling the book. In this text, the book itself has an essential role in the magical ritual: the practitioner is to take it down to the river, where he should read from it.[116]

In this case, as in most of these passages, the divine names contained in the book are responsible for its power. But the fact that they are written down in a book is significant to the magician. The physicality of the book or text is often an important component of the process of objectification of the tradition. The frontispieces of several editions of *Sefer Raziel* declare that it is not even necessary to read the book, for a house that contains it will be saved from fire.[117] Amulets must be worn or placed in a specific location in order to be effective.[118] In such cases, the myth of an esoteric

[113] On this passage see Chapter 4 and Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 376–77.

[114] See Chapter 6.

[115] A good example is an introduction to a magical book in the Genizah, MS. TS K1.21, fol. 1b lines 3–17, parallel to the introduction to *Sefer ha-Malbush* (printed in *Sefer Raziel* fol. 2b), and to *Sefer ha-Razim* 2:8–10; cf. 5:34–35. Cf. Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim,* 33–34. On the Genizah text see Chapter 5 above.

[116] A German translation of this text appears in Schäfer, *Übersetzung,* 3:188–212. The ritual instructions in the text have been translated and annotated in I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptism,* 267–70; cf. Swartz, "'Like the Ministering Angels.'"

[117] See L. Blau, "Raziel, Book of," *JE* 10:335.

[118] See Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic,* 132–59, and Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts,* 32–33.

oral tradition that must not be written down plays no part in the text's argument for the validity and power of the tradition. Rather, esotericism is expressed in the transmission of the book or text itself. Oral recitation of the text is still, however, a necessary ingredient of the ritual procedure.[119] In fact, several testimonies in Hekhalot literature enumerate the benefits the practitioner will derive from the oral repetition of the pericope.[120] Nor does the absence of a myth of oral transmission leave our authors bereft of a concept of tradition. Indeed, such a concept can be expressed in what Edward Shils calls "the endurance of past objects."[121]

The Heavenly Book

If the book originated in heaven, its power can operate there as well. This implication of the idea of the potent book is illustrated by the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* Genizah fragment analyzed above, first published by Gruenwald and then by Schäfer.[122] This text provides interesting evidence for our consideration of the role of the sacred book in the literature.

At the place where the extant text begins, the angel Ozhayah is instructing the mystic in "the study of the descent to the Merkavah" (*talmud yeridat ha-Merkavah*). This includes reception of a "seal" and a "path" (*netiv*) that he is to write down for himself "and for whomever wishes to descend and glimpse and see the King in His beauty" (line 24). The angel stresses that the traveler (the narrator) is fortunate to have him at his aid, unlike those who came before who were subject to great harm. He then gives the following instructions: "And take this path, that he may descend and see and not be harmed. For on a scroll I have placed it for you, and I have seen it, and afterwards you descended and sa[w] and tried and you were not harmed, for I have placed for you the paths of the Merkavah like light, and the courses of the firmament like the sun."[123] This passage may be referring to the text itself. It has been dictated by the angel and placed on a scroll,[124] which contains the "seals"—the magical names for pro-

[119] See Swartz, "Scribal Magic," 166.

[120] See for example §424, in *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* which recommends "reciting this *Mishnah*"; cf. §300. On these testimonies see below. Cf. the discussion of the religious significance of the fact of written scripture and its relationship to oral recitation in Graham, *Beyond the Written Word,* 58–66.

[121] Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), esp. 63–94 and 109–12. Of course, the magical book passed down from Noah or Adam need not be the original object itself, but a faithful copy. Some introductions are not always clear on this point; others, such as the Great Name text, assume that the power of the physical text is transferred to all copies.

[122] G8 (TS K21.95C). See Chapter 5.

[123] G8 fol. 2a lines 25–26; fol. 1 in Gruenwald, "*Qeṭa'im.*"

[124] Although these fragments are written on codex leaves, a few early manuscripts of

tection[125]—and the "path"—the instructions for avoiding fierce angels. It is then made accessible to the practitioners.[126]

The angel proceeds to tell of the dangers of the journey, including what happened to Ben Zoma at the first Hekhal. Ozhayah further declares that the scroll is available to "you and all who wish to descend to the Merkavah, whether in your generation or other generations." Halperin, in his discussion of this text, comments that although the descent is "a horribly dangerous activity . . . if there is anything esoteric or restricted about [it], the text does not show it."[127] In fact, both the account of the dangers and the encouragement to the reader to use the praxis are elements in the dialectic of esotericism described above. The danger plays an important role both in the rhetoric and phenomenology of the text. On the one hand, the constant stress that the technique must be performed correctly lends the praxis mystery and power. On the other hand, the motif of the dangers of not performing the ritual correctly reflects a genuine concern of the magician. The name, book, or ritual is seen as functioning independently of the moral character and religious consciousness of the practitioner.[128] If the name is valid for everyone, regardless of whether he is Moses or a humble shepherd, it must be used very carefully, as it calls up potent forces.

To be sure, the myth of Moses at Sinai provides an important paradigm for this emphasis on the marvelous book from heaven. However, the idea of the heavenly book given to a hero who brings it down for use in the earthly community is a pattern that precedes the Sinai story and spreads beyond it. This has been shown by Geo Widengren in *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book,*[129] based on sources ranging from ancient Mesopotamian to Mandaic, with a stop at the *Gedullat Moshe* midrashim.[130] It can be argued that both the Sinai traditions and the magical

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Hekhalot literature found in the Genizah are in fact written on scrolls; see Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente* 9. On the writing of rabbinic literature on scrolls, see Marc Bregman, "*Qeta' Qadum shel 'Avot de-Rabbi Natan mi-tokh Megillah,*" *Tarbiṣ* 52 (1982): 201–22.

[125] See Scholem, *Major Trends,* 50; idem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 133; Bar-Ilan, "*Ḥotmot Magiyyim.*"

[126] Cf. the "Book of the Princes" (*sefer ha-sarim*) mentioned in the Sar-Torah text on the same fragment (G8 fol 1a line 35; fol. 2a in Gruenwald, *Qeṭa'im*). Gruenwald ("*Qeṭa'im,*" 355) likens this scroll to a Greek-Jewish work published by Reitzenstein, *Poimandres* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1966), 291–300, entitled ἀρχαγγελικὴ βίβλος, attributed to Moses.

[127] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 370.

[128] Moral requirements for the praxis are enumerated in stereotyped lists of virtues that are conditions for approaching the divine realm; see n. above. Here, moral virtues function magically. If these requirements seem slight, they are only prerequisites and not indicators of the moral stature of the customer. Cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 379–82.

[129] Uppsala: A. B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1950. Cf. also *Jub.* 1:5 and 4 Ezra 14.

[130] Widengren describes a pattern that includes the enthronement of the recipient of the book, a motif that appears in the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* fragment. This motif has been shown by Wolfson ("*Yeridah*") to be prominent in the ascent texts of Hekhalot literature.

and Hekhalot myths concerning the acquisition of the book derive from this common pattern, rather than one having been generated directly as a consequence of the other.[131]

The Motif in Context

Such "advertisements" claiming the numinous origins and powers of the book or tradition are not confined to magical and medical books. Two of the most prominent "ascent" texts, *Hekhalot Rabbati* and *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* contain significant passages of attestation regarding their contents. In the case of *Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* these are appended to the text; in the case of *Hekhalot Rabbati* they serve to introduce it. In *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* this takes the form of an appendix to the text (§424) in which the "mishnah" itself, that is, the Merkavah materials that have come before, are to be recited along with what appears to be a ritual for securing good fortune on the New Year.[132] *Hekhalot Rabbati* is introduced by a series of finely crafted hymns accounting the glories (*gedullah*) available to the one who uses the text: He will be able to tell how many illegitimate children (*mamzerim*) there are in a family, his enemies will come down with horrifying skin diseases, and so on.[133]

A remarkable thing about these passages is how little they correspond to the contents of the books they introduce. Introductions and testimonies such as these are highly conventional and can serve any such text. So too the legend of the secrets taught by the angel to Noah can serve both the magical text and medical manual. Indeed, the introduction of *Sefer ha-Razim,* while clearly letting the reader know that he is getting a magical book, is not an accurate portrayal of its contents: no known recension of *Sefer ha-Razim* contains instructions for making an ark out of gopher wood.[134]

Likewise, the chain of tradition motif in Hekhalot texts is free-floating and can be used for various genres within the corpora. In fact, none of these passages is integral to the texts in which it is set. In *Merkavah Rabbah,* the testimony containing the Sar-Torah hymn (§§675–76) intervenes between a *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* unit and the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah; parallels to the *Shi'ur Qomah* chain suggest that §§734–35 may have been inserted into that complex; and the 3 Enoch chain appears in a collection of discrete traditions. It is possible that these attestations were added later

[131] Cf. Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 439–43. On the interrelationship of the Sinai and mystical traditions see especially Idel, "*Tefisat ha-Torah,*" which draws out many of the implications of the role of the heavenly book and its relationship to the idea of Torah.

[132] Halperin, "New Edition," 550.

[133] §§83–92. See Wewers, "Überlegenheit des Mystikers."

[134] See also Gruenwald's remarks in *Apocalyptic,* 227.

by redactors who wished to provide further validation by affirming not only that their traditions originated with Moses, but were handed down to the authorities of later times.

We would thus be wise not to assume that the original use of *Hekhalot Rabbati, Hekhalot Zuṭarti,* or *Ma'aseh Merkavah* was to obtain the practical benefits listed in these passages. This writer's study of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* has shown how the redactors of that text appropriated hymns which were originally conceived as liturgical and ascribed to them the instrumental power of affecting ascent and acquiring Torah.[135] So too we must distinguish the goals of the ascent texts as these introductions and testimonies portray them from their *Sitz-im-Leben* as determined by internal evidence. The affinity between magical texts and the testimonies to book and tradition in Hekhalot literature indicates that preexisting texts, of undetermined provenance, were taken by later authors to have been passed down in much the same way as magical texts were considered to have been transmitted.

Conclusions

This analysis has shown how the Hekhalot tradition saw itself as it developed through the late talmudic and early geonic period. We have seen that the chains of tradition in Hekhalot literature are based on the rabbinic model but manifest subtle though meaningful differences from it. It is now possible to address the question of the social implications of these differences. The genres of validation described above serve to legitimate the texts they introduce and at the same time ascribe to them extraordinary power. Paradoxically, they both reinforce and supplant notions of authority held by rabbinic society.

By setting the chain of tradition form in the context of Greco-Roman society, H. Fischel was able to underscore its social function: "In the light of this material it does not seem impossible to assume that the passages *Pirqe Aboth* 1.1 ff. and *Aboth deRabbi Nathan* A initially still reflected the purpose of the Greco-Roman models, i.e., not only to illustrate the route of transmission but also to ascertain the authentic possession of the god-derived object and with it, the legitimate claim of its possessors to rule, a claim which is also otherwise made for both the Greco-Roman *sophos*-sapiens and his tannaitic counterpart, the *Ḥākhām*."[136]

The rabbinic chains of tradition serve the function not only of supporting the authority of the rabbis, but the rabbinic process of Torah transmission itself. As Saldarini observes, "The chain of tradition implies that the

[135] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer.*

[136] Fischel, "Sorites," 126.

school of the rabbis, that is their teachings, thought, and way of life, stands at the center of Judaism and holds it together."[137]

In contrast, the authors of the esoteric and magical chains of tradition and its cognates advanced a counterclaim. In these testimonies, charisma is vested not in a particular class and its intellectual process, but in a potent name, ritual, or text. This name or text is valid for anyone who holds it. This emphasis on the accessibility of the book or tradition is particularly prominent in those passages that trace the origins and transmission of the magical book itself. To be sure, this contrast with the rabbinic ideology is modified in those texts, such as 3 Enoch, that stress the continuities of the Hekhalot tradition with that of the rabbis. Nonetheless, the essential differences in approach remain.

It is possible to read the emphasis that the name of God is available "to all Israel" as a protest against rabbinic authority, as Halperin does.[138] However, this discussion indicates that the relationship is somewhat more complex.

These factors are indeed indications that at the stage of development at which these testimonies were written, this literature is not the product of the inner life of a rabbinic elite, trained at once in halakhah and the mysteries of vision and theurgy. But its authors still look to that elite for inspiration. They adapt midrashim and legends found in rabbinic literature for the purposes of advertising these techniques.[139] Ideal figures are thus used unexpectedly. They not only serve as role models for a mystical or intellectual discipline, but are put to practical use by their identification with the magic of the text.[140] Like the sages of the Avot tradition, they serve a mediating function between God and the human community. They bring down, however, not the content of revelation, but its charismatic and provident power.

[137] Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism,* 77.

[138] See Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot,* 382–83; cf. Urbach, *Ha-Masoret.*

[139] This is not to say that all of the midrashim cited above originated in rabbinic circles. Indeed, many bear indications of beginnings in popular legends. These legends would thus be a common stock drawn on by both the rabbinic and esoteric literatures.

[140] This function of ideal figures in mystical traditions can thus be added to those described in Steven T. Katz, "Models, Modeling and Mystical Training," *Religion* (1982) 12: 247–75. Cf. also Collins and Nickelsberg, *Ideal Figures,* introduction, and Chapter 8 below.

PART IV

Conclusions

Chapter 8

SCHOLASTIC MAGIC

THIS EXPLORATION of magic in the service of scholasticism in ancient Judaism has been occasioned by several intersecting questions regarding the Hekhalot literature. These questions concern the social and historical background of this literature; the relationship of the magicians and mystics in ancient Judaic society to the rabbinic estate and its values; and the relationship between experience and ritual in Merkavah mysticism. We have examined the Sar-Torah texts, the dynamics of magical and Sar-Torah rituals, and the role of tradition and authority in Hekhalot and related literatures. The implications of these texts and themes for those questions can now be evaluated.

THE SAR-TORAH TRADITION IN PERSPECTIVE

The Sar-Torah and related texts concern magical techniques for gaining wisdom, memory, and skill in acquiring Torah. These texts fall into two general classifications: narrative texts that concern the cultivation of a specific angel, the Sar-Torah or *Sar ha-Panim,* who brings the rabbi wisdom and skill; and other texts that promise the reader wisdom and intellectual capacity through performance of a specific ritual or recitation of a magical name. In many ways they resemble widely attested magical texts that purport to grant the practitioner some tangible benefit such as financial or social success, or supernatural power such as invisibility. However, the Sar-Torah texts deserve our attention for the mythic framework into which they are set, and for their prominence in the Hekhalot corpus. Now that they have been analyzed according to form-critical and thematic criteria, it is useful to look at this corpus in perspective.

Sar-Torah Narrative

The Sar-Torah narratives we have examined are wonder stories told for the purpose of recommending and introducing a magical procedure. Most of them tell how the magic of the Sar-Torah is responsible for the greatness and erudition of a famous rabbi, especially Rabbi Ishmael. The extensive Zerubbabel narrative in *Hekhalot Rabbati* extends this pattern to include a story of the origins of the Sar-Torah praxis at the beginning of the Second

Temple period. The ritual texts for *petiḥat lev* and general wisdom, by contrast, are not framed to the same extent by narrative.

As we have seen, there are precedents for this device of framing magical procedures in narrative. The historiola form and chain of tradition, examined in Chapter 7, are common both to Jewish and non-Jewish magical texts. Most authors of magical texts are interested in validating their craft by recourse to a hallowed and powerful figure from the past, who is said to have performed his miracles and attained his heroic virtues though the very magic the present-day readers now have available to them.

However, Sar-Torah narrative goes beyond the magical historiola form in framing the ritual procedures and magical names that are at the heart of the literature. Unlike, for example, magical amulets in which brief stories are set into incantation texts, narrative Sar-Torah texts are stories into which the rituals and names are set. At the same time, the rituals are clearly the rationale for the narrative. This is illustrated by common form in which the case of Rabbi Ishmael is linked to the present-day practitioner. After Rabbi Ishmael relates his success with the Sar-Torah procedure taught to him by Rabbi Neḥuniah, he turns to the reader: "And now, any student whose study is not sustained in him should stand and bless and rise and adjure in the name of . . ." (§310). Likewise, in *Merkavah Rabbah,* when Rabbi Ishmael resolves a question about the procedure by asking Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Neḥuniah, he then turns to instruct his audience: "And so, for anyone who uses this praxis, his mouth must utter names and the fingers of his hands must count until he counts 111 times" (§681).

Sar-Torah narratives also observe several common conventions of Hekhalot literature. As in the ascent texts, *Shi'ur Qomah,* and other areas of Hekhalot literature, Rabbi Ishmael, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Neḥuniah are the principal figures. The relationship between them is roughly the same as well; Rabbi Ishmael is the younger student, who also represents the reader who wishes to know the technique for traveling to the Merkavah, seeing the divine glory, or attracting the Sar-Torah. Rabbi Akiba is his senior colleague and Rabbi Neḥuniah is his teacher. In a few texts, notably *Merkavah Rabbah,* the ascent to the Merkavah and the Sar-Torah praxis are linked.

Sar-Torah and Merkavah Traditions

The Sar-Torah literature, therefore, stands at a nexus of ascent traditions in Hekhalot literature and magical and angelological traditions found elsewhere in Jewish literature of late antiquity. This position raises the question of the historical relationship between Hekhalot literature and the Sar-Torah texts. While determining that relationship is not the principal goal of this study, we have seen several factors that bear on this problem.

David Halperin has argued that the Sar-Torah materials are integral to

the ascent texts in Hekhalot literature, and that they played an important part in shaping them.[1] The form-critical analysis undertaken above does not support this conclusion. In most cases where there seems to be a textual link between Sar-Torah and ascent passages, the former have been added to the texts at a later stage of their redaction. None of the Sar-Torah texts is integral to an ascent text in the corpus. The Sar-Torah texts of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* were separate sections that had been incorporated into the larger structure of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* at a later date.[2] Moreover, many of the Sar-Torah texts are appendixes to ascent texts, such as *Hekhalot Rabbati,* or placed among a series of miscellaneous brief units between major ascent texts. The Sar-Torah text in *Merkavah Rabbah* is a case in point. That Sar-Torah complex has been placed in the major manuscripts between two brief ascent units also found in *Hekhalot Zuṭarti* (§§671–76=344–48) and the *Shi'ur Qomah* (§688 and following). The final testimonies of that complex, in which Rabbi Akiba does have a vision of the divine throne, serve to relate the preceding Sar-Torah material with the visionary *Shi'ur Qomah* tradition that follows. The ascent of Rabbi Akiba is not, therefore, integral to the Sar-Torah text in *Merkavah Rabbah;* nor can the Sar-Torah practice be considered the principal rationale for the visionary material.

It has also been shown that the ritual procedures of abstention, isolation, and ablution found principally in the Sar-Torah texts were not formulated for the purpose of cultivating the vision of the heavens that figures in the ascent texts of Hekhalot literature. Therefore, we have reason to separate the two aims—attraction of the angel and ascent to heaven—in the corpus.

At the same time, this study has found important affinities between the two traditions. For example, the model of Moses' approach to Sinai, elaborated in midrashim and magical texts, resembles that of the mystic's approach to the Merkavah and the Sar-Torah practitioner's cultivation of the angels. However, these affinities are most probably not as much due to direct borrowing as to a common dynamic that underlies them all. In these literatures, the human must approach the sphere of divine beings and therefore purify himself to an extraordinary degree. This pattern of approach to the sacred is essentially cultic, and undergirds any ritual or mythic Jewish system that seeks to describe an individual's attempt to enter the divine realm. To realize this goal, the authors of the Sar-Torah traditions drew on a variety of midrashic, halakhic, and folkloric sources.

The Hekhalot corpus is a complex network composed of different, interrelated strands. Numinous hymns, midrashic exposition of Ezekiel,

[1] Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot.*

[2] Swartz, *Mystical Prayer.*

Shi'ur Qomah traditions, and practical magic all play a part in this composite literature. The Sar-Torah and ascent narrative traditions are two of these strands. They are independent but have been placed together both in individual texts, such as *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and *Hekhalot Zutarti,* and in the Hekhalot corpus by later redactors who saw the purposes of ascent and acquisition of skill in Torah as intimately related. They were linked at a later stage in the development of the tradition.

An interesting example of this later stage of development is the Sar-Torah section of the *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* fragment (G8 and G22). This text clearly was written after the *Hekhalot Rabbati* and related traditions, on which it is probably dependent. It integrates Sar-Torah elements into an ascent narrative to a degree not found in the *Synopse* manuscript tradition. There, unlike in the texts of the *Synopse,* the mystic receives the secrets of the Sar-Torah in the course of an ascent. By the time of its composition, the relationship between these two strands of the Hekhalot tradition was probably taken for granted.

Dating and Provenance

It is difficult to date the Sar-Torah texts individually or the literature as a whole. Like most of Hekhalot literature, they contain no specific and reliable historical allusions to link them to a particular time and place. Since the literature does not abound in genres, such as liturgical poetry, that can be dated on stylistic grounds, formal criteria are of limited value for dating.[3] However, it is useful to evaluate what evidence we have.

Scholem and others have argued that the ascent traditions preserved in Hekhalot literature are echoed in several talmudic passages.[4] In contrast, Sar-Torah traditions do not appear to have direct parallels in early rabbinic literature. Such affinities described above between Sar-Torah narratives and midrashim of Moses' ascent are more typological than indicative of a genetic relationship. This argues against an early date for a Sar-Torah genre that influenced rabbinic literature.

However, we may establish a *terminus ad quem* for the Sar-Torah phenomenon. Salmon b. Yeruḥim's tenth-century Book of the Wars of the Lord contains a detailed paraphrase of the Zerubbabel Sar-Torah narrative in *Hekhalot Rabbati.* As noted in Chapter 6 above, Hai Gaon's responsum regarding Merkavah mysticism is based in part on a passage from *Hekhalot Zutarti* (§424). This passage, while not a Sar-Torah text per se, does re-

[3] Cf. ibid., 216–17.

[4] Scholem, *Gnosticism;* cf. Urbach, *"Ha-Masoret"* Halperin, *Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature;* Morray-Jones, "Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition." See the Introduction above.

semble ritual testimonies found in Sar-Torah texts throughout Hekhalot corpus. We can therefore suppose that this literary type was well established by Hai's time.

The earliest explicit indications of the Sar-Torah phenomenon, then, date from the tenth century. However, there are other elements of the phenomenon that have earlier origins. The archangel figure represented by Metatron appears in the Talmud and in the seventh-century Babylonian incantation bowls, although not as the Sar-Torah.[5] Jewish magical techniques used by the Sar-Torah practitioners date from the early centuries C.E. at the latest. And, as we have seen, the application of folk medicine and magic to memory is also rooted in Judaism of late antiquity.[6]

While specific, meaningful historical references are few in the literature, we can, perhaps, detect a few hints of the literature's provenance from internal evidence. The *Hekhalot Rabbati* narrative has as its major figure Zerubbabel, who is the subject of an apocalyptic text from Byzantine Palestine. Although there is no direct dependence of the former text on the latter, the correspondence leaves open the possibility that the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah tradition has Palestinian roots. It should also be noted that Salmon ben Yeruḥim probably lived in Palestine.[7] However, there are also indications of another geographic factor in a later section of the text. At §305, a testimony attesting to the success of the praxis has been appended to the Zerubbabel text. The magic, say the rabbis, is so potent that it is effective in the Diaspora: "Thus Rabbi Eliezer the Great and the sages said, 'Perhaps we have the merit of the land of Israel in our favor.' They did not believe it until they sent Rabbi Akiba to Babylonia and it was performed and it succeeded."

This suggests that the author expected that his Babylonian readers would be concerned about whether the ritual could be performed there. The *Ḥotam ha-Merkavah* fragments, which integrate Sar-Torah elements, praise the "house of the rabbi in Babylonia."[8] Moreover, the Aramaic texts related to Sar-Torah practices, such as the Aramaic text in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and the incantation for the Great Name, are in the Babylonian dialect.[9] A Babylonian provenance for much of this material is thus likely. It is also probable that the phenomenon has its origins in the Amoraic period and took further shape in the early Geonic period.[10]

[5] See, for example, Gordon, Bowls D and L, where Metatron appears as the Great Prince.

[6] See Chapter 2.

[7] See Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 69.

[8] G8, fol. 2a, line 14.

[9] Cf. also *Havdalah de-Rabbi Akibah*, also a Babylonian Aramaic magical text.

[10] This thesis corresponds to other recent judgments about the provenance of Hekhalot texts. Cf. Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, 51–71; see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, 220, and the studies cited there.

The Sar-Torah Tradition: Social Indications

It is now possible to assess the evidence for the social position of the authors of the Sar-Torah texts. The Sar-Torah narratives associate themselves with rabbinic values and history in two important ways. First, by casting three prominent early sages, Rabbis Ishmael, Akiba, and Neḥuniah, in the role of heroes of the literature, they have expressed their conviction that the status of rabbi is the greatest glory of the ordinary Jew. As we will see, however, this status carries with it, according to these texts, not only the distinction of being a great scholar, but more worldly honors and powers as well. Second, the *raison d'être* of the texts—the need for a potent memory in rabbinic education—testifies to the primacy of the values of Torah study and rabbinic scholasticism.

Nonetheless, we have seen indications that several elements in Sar-Torah texts diverge from what are conventionally seen as rabbinic attitudes to ritual, revelation, and authority. This stance of the literature, which shows itself both beholden to rabbinic values and distinct from them, can be of use in locating the social position of its authors. The implications of two major examples of this position, ritual and authority, are examined here.

Ritual and Purity

It has been established that the chief goal of the rituals of abstention and isolation in the principal Sar-Torah texts is to prepare the human practitioner for his encounter with powerful and volatile divine beings, who are to fulfill his requests for wisdom and skill in learning. The practitioner must go to extraordinary means to achieve the requisite state of purity. As we have seen, rituals in the Sar-Torah and related texts show signs of a variety of influences, from rabbinic halakhah to Greco-Roman notions of the body. When halakhah comes into play, it is not the halakhah of the mainstream, but of a minority of rabbinic Jews of the talmudic and geonic periods that is reflected. The story of Rabbi Neḥuniah's deposition in *Hekhalot Rabbati* is a case in point. It has been noted that the story's approach to ritual purity is extrahalakhic.[11] This approach also informs the rituals of purity and avoidance in the Sar-Torah texts. Sar-Torah rituals prescribe standards of menstrual purity well beyond those of the mainstream of halakhah. However, it has been shown that several atypical texts of the late rabbinic and geonic periods reflect similar standards.

A key text in the interpretation of the Rabbi Neḥuniah story is *Braita de-Massekhet Niddah,* described in Chapter 6 above. This document has

[11] Lieberman, "Knowledge of Halakhah"; Schlüter, "Erzählung."

had an unusual history. Its deviation from rabbinic halakhah goes well beyond its extraordinary strictness with regard to menstrual purity; its teachings fly in the face of clear rabbinic dicta.[12] *Braita de-Massekhet Niddah* reflects folk beliefs and practices regarding the impurity of women that persisted from the talmudic period well into the Middle Ages. Two customs, the removal of the menstruant from the house and denial of her entry into the synagogue, were entrenched among the laity in many communities, despite the repeated denunciations of these practices by the rabbinic leadership. In *Braita de-Massekhet Niddah,* these customs are based on the ideas that the menstruant's speech or breath itself is polluting and that the earth that she walks on is impure. Such notions also inform the ritual prohibitions we find in Hekhalot literature.

These texts are thus important evidence for the study of popular religion in the talmudic period and offer an opportunity to see ritual practices in early Jewish mysticism as evidence for the same.[13] The unusual purity customs can take their place with folk practices such as *kapparot, tashlikh,* and other extrahalakhic rituals.[14] Like the practice of the separation of the menstruant, these customs were discouraged by rabbinic leadership.

In case of our mystics and magicians, however, the extrahalakhic dimension of these rituals and its implications for their relationship to rabbinic Judaism are more complex. To understand the ambivalence of the Sar-Torah practitioners to rabbinic law and ideals, we must explore the implications of the Sar-Torah texts' approach to tradition and authority.

Tradition and Authority

When we turn to the Sar-Torah literature's notions of tradition and authority for indication of the social position of its authors, we can learn both from its affinities with the rabbinic tradition and ethos and its deviations from them. The comparison of their use of ideal figures and chains of tradition with their rabbinic counterparts undertaken above provides a case in point.

In Chapter 7, it was shown that the Hekhalot literature's approach to the use of ideal figures and chains of tradition had its roots in the genre of

[12] See Dinari, "*Minhage Ṭum'at ha-Niddah,*" 304–5. Indeed, the book seems at times to be a pallid imitation, if not an outright parody, of mishnaic literature. The text cites "Ḥaninah ben ha-Qannah" (for Neḥuniah ben ha-Qannah) and opens with the words, "Shammai says," which also begin m. Niddah. This led Schechter ("Jewish Literature," 339) to propose that the sources of the text can be found among Karaites or Samaritans. This view has been refuted by Dinari, "*Minhage Ṭum'at ha-Niddah*"; cf. Lieberman, *Sheqi'in,* 22.

[13] See below on the term popular religion as applied to this phenomenon; cf. also the Introduction above.

[14] On these folk rituals see the studies collected in Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Studies in Jewish Law, Custom and Folklore* (n.p.: Ktav, 1970); and idem, "Tashlik."

magical historiola. Historiolae in Jewish magical texts appropriate motifs found in rabbinic midrashim for the purpose of validating their power to heal, improve memory, and so on. Indeed, at times these midrashim can be traced directly to textual exegeses of scripture. The Sar-Torah texts, however, went further than other magical texts in this appropriation of common motifs. Their authors invoked the authority of the early rabbis to promote their magical recipes. Moreover, these recipes offer nothing less than shortcuts to success in the very endeavor most valued by the rabbinic estate—the study of Torah.

Like the mystics described in Steven Katz's essay, "Models, Modelling, and Mystical Training," the Sar-Torah practitioners and magical writers adopted ideal figures as their own.[15] Moses, Joshua, and Rabbis Ishmael and Akiba are all represented by the texts as having participated in the mystical and magical traditions in ways that could not be anticipated from their depiction in biblical and rabbinic literatures. However, this appropriation of their personae has a dual effect.

As Katz observes elsewhere, mystical experiences provide not radical exegesis of scripture but experiential confirmation of it.[16] So too the tendency in magical texts to appeal to biblical and rabbinic authority reinforces the power of that authority in a particular way. As Katz observes: "This very use of allegory and symbolism, as well as other varied hermeneutical devices, functions to *maintain* the authority of the canonical sources under interpretation rather than to destroy or transcend them, as is usually assumed. That is to say, the presupposition on which the mystical use of allegory and symbolic modes of exegesis depends is that the canonical books of one's tradition do in fact possess *truth* and *authority* claimed for them."[17] The same can be said about the Hekhalot literature's use of ideal figures. The attribution of Sar-Torah magic to central sages of the tannaitic age serves to maintain rabbinic notions of authority and its relationship to Torah.

Yet because Torah was conceived not only as a corpus of knowledge, but as a process carried out by a particular class of scholars, the Sar-Torah phenomenon circumvents the social circumstances under which this central rabbinic activity is to take place. It does so by offering a way to attain scholastic knowledge and success instantly. Moreover, magical and Sar-Torah texts use ideal figures more directly. They are not simply exempla to be emulated, like Katz's mystical models, but serve in effect as powerful intercessors whose past miraculous deeds and potent magical tools aid the contemporary individual seeking something of their achievement.

[15] Katz, "Models"; see also Nickelsberg, *Ideal Figures.*

[16] Katz, "'Conservative' Character," 20. Cf. Wolfson, *Speculum That Shines,* on the hermeneutical aspects of mystical phenomena.

[17] Katz, "'Conservative' Character," 20. Italics in the original.

We have also seen that the authors' grasp of rabbinic historiography is far from assured. There are inconsistencies in the chain of tradition in Hekhalot literature and in the lists of rabbis in Rabbi Neḥuniah's fellowship in *Hekhalot Rabbati*.[18] Furthermore, there is little in rabbinic literature to support the depiction of Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Neḥuniah as masters of magical secrets.[19] It is unlikely that these writers, who probably lived centuries after the tannaim to which they attributed their texts, had access to in-house political and historiographic traditions such as those employed by Sherira Gaon and other post-talmudic writers. It follows that they stood outside the circles in which those traditions were transmitted.[20]

Social Indications: Conclusions

The Sar-Torah and related texts thus manifest a deep ambivalence toward rabbinic notions of Torah, tradition, and purity. These factors are indications that, at least at the stage of development at which these testimonies were written, this literature is not the product of the inner life of a rabbinic elite, trained at once in halakhah and the mysteries of vision and theurgy. Rather, we can look to other sectors of Jewish society in late antiquity to place its authors. This study has shown that the Sar-Torah and related texts incorporate elements of popular religion.

The idea of "popular religion" has undergone some transformation in the past few decades. Many earlier accounts of the relationship between elite and popular religion tended to see them as two separate cultures. But recent research reveals complex patterns of interaction and appropriation between social strata—evidence of what have been termed "reciprocal" or "circular" relationships between the classes or estates.[21] Discussion has also shifted from the pattern of the resistance and accommodation of enduring popular "superstitions" by the elite to the underlying mentality that allows both to appropriate a given belief or ritual pattern.[22]

Moreover, religious phenomena of social groups lying between the elite and the peasantry are often overlooked. To gain a more complete picture of ancient cultures, it is necessary to offer perspectives into worldviews of

[18] See Chapter 7 and Dan, "*Tefisat ha-Historiah*."

[19] Rabbi Akiba is represented in t. Ḥag. 2:2 as one of the four who entered the *Pardes*, and Rabbi Ishmael is depicted in B. Ber. 7a as having a divine vision. However, the latter tradition is not prominent in Hekhalot literature.

[20] Indeed, the attitude of the texts toward these rabbis is closer to that found in folkloric sources. Cf. the wonder stories of Rabbi Ishmael in *Liqquṭe ha-Pardes* discussed in Chapter 6 above.

[21] See the discussion in Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (New York: Penguin, 1987), xiv-xviii. Cf. also Davis, "Tasks and Themes."

[22] See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*.

those whose literacy does not reflect an elite education.[23] This study has shown the intersections of the ethos of the rabbinic intelligentsia of the talmudic period and other spheres of religious culture in ancient Judaism. This ethos was appropriated and recast by ritual practitioners and storytellers who wished to achieve for themselves the tangible benefits—honor, power, and wealth—of that intelligentsia. The authors of the Sar-Torah and related texts were not illiterate—indeed, we should recognize the extent to which many practitioners of what we call popular religion, especially in Jewish society, had some degree of literacy. Thus the evidence for this phenomenon is found in literary texts at the fringes of the rabbinic canon, as well as in magical texts and mantic handbooks.

As Charles Long points out, it is not uncommon for esoteric beliefs to be held in the lower strata of society.[24] The Sar-Torah and related texts can be considered esoteric not in that they are available only to a select few, but according to the rhetorical tension of esotericism and exotericism described in Chapter 7. They present themselves as at once having been revealed to a select succession of ancients and having been made available to all by virtue of their inclusion in the book the reader now holds. In addition, the recondite magical names and ritual procedures add an air of mystery to the magic.

At the same time, we cannot assign our authors to the lower classes, in light of the degree of education, artistry, and acquaintance (if limited) with rabbinic tradition found in these texts. The authors were aware of the relative chronology of rabbinic succession, although their grasp of its particulars was not entirely accurate. Their knowledge of biblical literature and statutory liturgy also distinguished them from the wholly uneducated.

Where, then, can we look in ancient Jewish society for the authors of our texts? It is important to recognize that we cannot go beyond the evidence in specifying a social group that may have produced this literature; its pseudepigraphic and rhetorical nature is designed precisely to mask its social origins and our evidence for social strata in Jewry of late antiquity is limited. However, we can point to segments of those societies that shared the characteristics described above as possible social locations of the phenomenon.

One important source of religious activity that was not entirely within rabbinic jurisdiction was the synagogue. This may seem surprising, since synagogue liturgy and conduct is discussed at length in early rabbinic literature, and the synagogue as it emerged from the Middle Ages onward was in many ways a rabbinic institution.[25] However, there is mounting evi-

[23] Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, deals with such a case.

[24] Charles Long, "Popular Religion," *ER* 11:440–52.

[25] For an account of the struggle for rabbinic authority in the synagogue see Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1979).

dence that ancient synagogues functioned as autonomous institutions from the rabbinic academies and resisted the rabbis' attempts to regulate their activities.[26] The evidence for this has been summarized recently in an important paper by Lee I. Levine.[27] Nor was the liturgical poetry of the synagogue always sanctioned by the rabbinic authorities.[28] This tension continued into the Middle Ages, as S. D. Goitein has shown from Genizah documents.[29] The synagogue was the locus of several types of secondary religious authority. Affinities between the creativity of the liturgical poets (*payeṭanim*) and composers of Merkavah hymnology has been shown,[30] and these circles could have nurtured other esoteric activity such as that of the Sar-Torah literature. Besides liturgical poets, there were preachers, targumists, and other functionaries who would have been influenced by the academy yet did not participate fully in its intellectual life.

Another significant social role was fulfilled by scribes. Scribes in ancient and Jewish medieval society were not necessarily rabbis.[31] Recent research on magical texts from the Genizah suggests that professional scribes may have been called upon to compose and transmit magical texts for local clients.[32] Also recently, David Frankfurter has shown a deep connection between scribal expertise and ethos and the conceptualization and composition of magical texts in Greco-Roman Egypt.[33]

As the Sar-Torah and Merkavah traditions were transmitted to Byzantium and central Europe, they were taken up increasingly by the rabbinic leadership. The *Chronicle of Aḥimaaz* represents the tradition's founding heroes as masters of mystical secrets, and the Ḥaside Ashkenaz were indus-

[26] On the distinction between the synagogue and the *Bet Midrash,* see Dan Urman, "The House of Assembly and the House of Study: Are They One and the Same?" *JJS* 44 (1993): 236–57.

[27] Yisrael Levine, "*Bet Kenneset ke-Mosad Kehilati: Mi Qava' et Mediniuto?*" *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies* Division B (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1994), 1–8 (Hebrew section). For the situation in the Babylonian synagogues see Gafni, *Yahadut Bavel,* 109–17.

[28] See for example Aharon Mirsky, "*Ha-Shirah bi-Tequfat ha-Talmud,*" *Yerushalaim: Shenaton le-Divre Sifrut ve-Hagut* 3–4 (1970): 161–70, on tension between professional poets and the rabbis.

[29] S. D. Goitein, "*Hitmodedut ben Bet-ha-Kenesset le-ven ha-Qehillah,*" in *Sefer Ḥayyim Schirman: Qoveṣ Meḥqarim,* ed. Shraga Abrahamson and Aharon Mirsky (Jerusalem: Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, 1970), 69–77.

[30] On affinities between piyyut and Hekhalot literature see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer;* and Ithamar Gruenwald, "*Piyyuṭe Yannai ve-Sifrut Yorde Merkavah,*" *Tarbiṣ* 36 (1967): 257–77.

[31] On Jewish scribes in the Middle Ages see Goitein, *Mediterranean Society,* 2:228–40.

[32] See Swartz, "Scribal Magic."

[33] David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power"; idem, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: The Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek Traditions," *Helios* 21 (1994): 189–221; cf. William Brashear, "Magical Papyri: Magic in Bookform," in *Das Buch als magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt,* ed. Peter Ganz (Weisbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1992), 25–57.

trious collectors, editors, and commentators to the material.[34] We know little about how the Sar-Torah and Merkavah texts were received by their authors' contemporaries. But by the high Middle Ages, the authors of the Hekhalot pseudepigraphies had achieved their goal of having their revelations accepted as those of Rabbis Ishmael and Akiba.

This brief survey of non-elite religious groups in the rabbinic milieu has not proven that the Sar-Torah literature came from one of them; rather it has served to convey something of the social texture in which our authors may have arisen. Each of these groups can be characterized as non-elite intellectuals; each was involved in activity unsanctioned by the rabbis; and each was also apparently beholden to the rabbinic system for many of its core values. Recently, scholars of Gnosticism have also sought to find its social location in circles of non-elite intellectuals.[35]

The Sar-Torah literature thus cannot be characterized either as the product of the ignorant masses or of the scholarly class. For Jewish society in late antiquity was not composed merely of an elite and a lower class of *'am ha-'ares;* we have seen that there were synagogue functionaries, scribes, non-intellectual professional reciters (*tannaim*), and a complex network of professions and social groups. These groups were literate and acquainted with much rabbinic law and lore; and yet they still stood outside the central circles of the rabbinic academy and may at times have been in tension with them.

The dialectic described above between the exoteric and esoteric impulses in these literatures would thus serve to set the practitioners apart from the values of the majority and of the elite, but assure those who lacked the social status of that elite that they too could attain the learning and prestige of a Hillel or Rabbi Ishmael. Their investment of a book or divine name with instrumental power served at once to circumvent the scholastic tradition—by placing its charisma outside of the specific discipline of the academy—and at the same time to maintain it—by acknowledging its source in biblical revelation and rabbinic succession.

The Hekhalot texts often boast of the superiority of the one who has traveled to the Merkavah or used the Sar-Torah magic. The most conspicuous example is the introduction to *Hekhalot Rabbati,* which details the wondrous powers of the mystics.[36] This would seem to correlate with their

[34] On the Byzantine channels of esoteric literature see especially Wolfson, "Shabbatai Donnolo."

[35] Cf. Wevers, "Überlegenheidt," 22, and the literature cited there on analogues to the social situation of Gnosticism; see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 288–94, on Gnosticism as the expression of dependent urban classes and displaced intellectuals; cf. Henry A. Green, *The Economic and Social Origins of Gnosticism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).

[36] Cf. Wewers, "Überlegenheit."

emphasis on esotericism and privilege and the exclusion of those who are morally or physically unfit, or of the wrong sex. However, we would be mistaken to assume that the authors therefore constituted an actual social elite.[37] They clearly aspired to elite status and considered themselves cut off from that status. Their "elitism" was akin to that of secret societies and similar groups, who can be found at any social level and whose esoteric nature functions primarily to convince its members of their validity and power.

Torah and Wisdom

We have seen that the Sar-Torah and related phenomena negotiate between rabbinic scholasticism and practical magic. Can we ascertain a distinctive religious purpose behind these texts? After he has acquired the great book or learned the powerful mystery, fasted the requisite number of days, fought off angels, and successfully communicated with the proper divine beings, what does the practitioner get for all his troubles?

According to the Sar-Torah traditions, the practitioner acquires Torah. This deceptively simple idea is expressed in several ways and can mean several things. The principal nouns employed in this corpus for the goals of the praxes are *Torah* and *Ḥokhmah* (wisdom). To be sure, these concepts are not necessarily identical in the literature; the nuances are explored below. Other specific categories of study are listed: Scripture (*miqra*); *mishnah,* which is a term used in the literature both to refer to the mishnaic traditions themselves and to any textual unit;[38] *talmud,* which probably refers to the comparative study of mishnaic and related traditions and not to the actual text of the Talmud itself; *halakhah;* and *shemu'ah,* traditions or legal decisions that are heard by the student. In the poetic dialogue in the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah section, God lists the types of learning Israel wishes to acquire:

I know what you seek,
and My heart has recognized what you desire:
much Torah is what you seek,
and a multitude of study and a great many traditions, and to inquire of the law is what you wish for,
and a multitude of secrets[39] is what you desire,
to increase testimony in mountains upon mountains,
to pile up sagacity in hills upon hills,
to increase study in the courtyards

[37] See above.
[38] Cf. 706, referring to the *Shi'ur Qomah,* and 335 referring to *Hekhalot Zutarti.*
[39] Reading *razy*[*m*] with MS. Oxf. 1531. MS. B238: *rbnym;* MSD. M22: *rybwy.*

and dialectic (*pilpul*) in the streets,
and to multiply *halakhot* like the sand of the sea,
and rabbis like the dust of the earth. (§287)

This list of types of learning clearly presupposes that rabbinic study constitutes wisdom. Some of these passages are evidence for a notion of the rabbinic curriculum.[40] In such later texts as *Midrash Mishle,* the knowledge of the cosmos, including that of the Hekhalot and the *Shi'ur Qomah,* is placed quite naturally alongside of Torah, halakhah, and midrash.

Skill

The Sar-Torah practitioner acquires Torah by gaining a set of practical skills. First of all and most important, he acquires a prodigious memory and retains what he has learned. The Sar-Torah narratives about the young Rabbi Ishmael illustrate this. In these stories it is Rabbi Ishmael's memory that is at fault and that must be improved by means of the Sar-Torah technique taught by Rabbi Neḥuniah. When the praxis succeeded, "Never again did I forget anything my ears heard from my teacher, of study; nor would I ever again forget anything of the paths of Torah in which I engaged for their truth."

As we have seen, the Sar-Torah phenomenon attests to the important place of memorization not only in rabbinic culture, but in antiquity in general. In classical antiquity and the Middle Ages through the Renaissance, scholastics employed exoteric and esoteric mnemonic techniques to aid memory. Some of these, particularly those that involved the building of a "palace" which held the items or points to be recalled, attained an intricacy common to esoteric systems.[41] Some of these exercises amounted to little more than parlor games.[42] But often, they enabled public figures, orators, and intellectuals to perform impressive feats of recitation and recall. While others relied on pedagogic techniques and a few mnemotechnical devices such as *simanim,* the Sar-Torah practitioners summoned the angels themselves to aid them in their memorization and retention.

[40] See Chapter 4.

[41] The reader will note that the ascent texts in Hekhalot literature also concern "palaces"—that is, the celestial *Hekhalot* themselves. This might prompt the speculation that the palaces described in Hekhalot literature may indeed be related to the classical memory palaces—the former functioning as a framework for the Sar-Torah practitioner to place esoteric or rabbinic lore and thus aid memorization. As attractive as such a speculation might be, there is no textual evidence to support it. However, it is not impossible that there is a mnemonic dimension to the "lists of revealed things" in apocalyptic and cosmological Hekhalot traditions. These elements of Hekhalot literature are discussed below.

[42] For an example, see Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Mateo Ricci.*

Material and Spiritual Advantages

The increased skill in study that the Sar-Torah practitioner acquires results in very palpable social advantages, which in turn lead to betterment of his material condition. The Sar-Torah text in *Hekhalot Rabbati* is particularly explicit about the social status that the Sar-Torah secrets will grant. In God's poetic speech enumerating the things Israel longs for, proficiency in Torah and judgment flows seamlessly into social status. His list of types of wisdom quoted above (§287) continues:

> To establish sessions [*yeshivot*] in the gates of the tents,
> to expound in them the forbidden and permitted,
> to declare pure in them that which is pure,
> and to declare impure in them that which is impure;
> to declare (ritually) fit [*kasher*] that which is fit,
> and to declare unfit that which is unfit,
> to recognize in them types of blood,
> and to instruct the menstruant in what to do;
> to tie crowns on your heads,
> and the wreath of royalty on the heads of your children,
> to compel kings to bow down to you,
> and to obligate nobles to prostrate before you;
> To spread your name on every shore.
> and your renown in the ports of the seas. (§288)

The ability—that of a wise rabbi and judge—to recognize types of menstrual blood and declare what is forbidden and permitted will lead naturally to the practitioners' influence and fame. The resulting wisdom will take on almost supernatural effects. The poem continues:

> to enlighten your faces with the radiance of the day,
> between your eyes like the planet Venus.
> If you merit this seal,
> to make use of My crown,
> no ignorant person shall ever be found,
> and there shall not be a fool or simpleton among you.

Indeed, in the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah and *Merkavah Rabbah,* Rabbi Ishmael testifies to his enlightenment, which is likened to an almost messianic event.

> And when I heard this great mystery, my eyes were enlightened and all that I heard—whether scriptures, Mishnah, or anything—I would not forget anymore. The world was renewed [for me] in purity, and it was as if I had come

into a new world. (§309)

When my ears heard this great mystery, the world was transformed for me for purity, and my heart was such that it was as if I had come into a new world. And each and every day it seemed to me as if I were standing before the Throne of Glory. (§680)

Other material and spiritual benefits are said to result from the mere recitation of Sar-Torah and Hekhalot texts. In the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah version B, Rabbi Ishmael declares not only that one who "recites this mystery" will have social status, but that he will be physically attractive and furthermore will be spared evil in this world and punishment in the world to come: "His stature will be pleasing, his speech will be accepted and fear of him will be rest on (fellow-) creatures, and his dreams will be calm, and he will be saved from all kinds of tribulations and witchcraft, and from the judgment of Gehinnom" (§311).

As we have seen, this testimony follows a pattern of declarations in magical texts and others about the attendant benefits of the text they recommend. Not all of these benefits are directly related to the explicit purpose of the texts. The poetic introduction to the ascent section of *Hekhalot Rabbati* known as the *gedullah* hymns (§81–93) is a case in point.[43] These hymns claim powers of divination and worldly accolades not mentioned in the body of *Hekhalot Rabbati*. Most likely, the authors were able to make these claims because of the presumed powers of the names contained in them—powers that were understood to operate independent of the purposes for which they are used. A particularly wide range of powers is ascribed to those who know the Great Name: "Anyone who knows this great name will [be able to] take a lion by the ears and a serpent by the skull of its head. If he rages at the sea it will dry,[44] and if at a fire, if it rages, it will be extinguished. If he wants to kill, he can kill, and if he wants to revive, he can revive." The talmudic attestation to the power of the forty-two-letter name is parallel to the testimony from the Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah quoted above: "Anyone who knows it and is careful with it and guards it in purity is beloved above and esteemed below, and fear of him rests on (fellow-) creatures; and he inherits two worlds: this world and the world to come."[45]

More prosaic versions of this type of testimony, in which the material and apotropaic benefits of performing a particular *mitzvah*, such as the recitation of the *Shema'*, can be found in the Talmud.[46] In the geonic period, the material benefits of the study of Torah were also enumerated in

[43] See Wewers, "Überlegenheit" and Chapter 7 above.

[44] Cf. Nahum 1:6, adapted in *Ma'aseh Merkavah* 596.

[45] B. Qid. 71a. See Chapter 5 above.

[46] Cf., for example, the list of statements in b. Ber. 5a regarding the apotropaic powers of reciting the *Shema'*.

an talmudic apocryphon known as *Pereq Qinyan Torah,* which was appended to the tractate Avot. Its language bears some resemblance to these testimonies. According to a statement attributed to Rabbi Meir, anyone who engages in Torah will be beloved and honored by God and human beings and more: "[People] benefit by his counsel and perspicacity, discernment and might, as it is said: 'Mine are counsel and perspicacity; I am discernment and mine is might' [Prov. 8:14].[47] And he is granted kingship and governance,[48] and capacity for judgment, and secrets of Torah [*raze Torah*] are revealed to him."

Pereq Qinyan Torah also stresses the student's need for modesty and that he is not to pursue honor for its own sake.[49] The Sar-Torah literature, however, refined the emphasis on the material and spiritual benefits of Torah found in such exhortatory statements virtually to the point of hypostasis.

Wisdom

The Sar-Torah is sometimes known as the *Sar-Ḥokhmah,* the "Prince of Wisdom."[50] Several texts speak primarily of the wisdom to be gained by the praxis; at times, the Torah itself is not mentioned. In the Sar ha-Panim incantation, the angel is said to reveal "the secrets of above and below and the profundity[51] of the foundations of below and the enigmas of wisdom and the skills of perspicacity [*ta'alumot ḥokhmah ve-'ormat toshiah*]" (§623). In many cases, it is difficult to tell exactly what these terms mean. The Sar ha-Panim text uses language from Job and Proverbs—*ta'alumot ḥokhmah ve-'ormat toshiah*—where they probably refer to practical wisdom. However, the references to "profundity" and "enigmas" probably indicate that these terms have a deeper connotation for the author.

It is possible that in some instances *ḥokhmah* simply refers to the individual's intelligence and insight in his analysis of Torah, halakhah, and tradition. In talmudic terminology, he thus would not only become *Sinai* —knowing and retaining vast amounts of material—but *'oqer harim*—able to uproot mountains with his sharp analytical skills.[52] In general, though, intelligence was equated with the ability to memorize. This can be seen from the end of the Sar-Torah narrative of *Hekhalot Rabbati,* in

[47] Cf. the use of these terms in the incantation for the Great Name (489).

[48] Or, "they [that is, people] grant him. . . ."

[49] See, for example, Avot 6:5. Cf. also Rabbi Ishmael's assurances to the angel in Chapter of Rabbi Neḥuniah (313) that he has not made the angel descend "for [my] glory, but to do the will of your Master." Cf. a similar assurance given by Jonathan b. Uziel in b. Meg. 3a.

[50] See for example, *Ma'aseh Merkavah* Section II.

[51] Heb. *meḥqar.* Cf. Ps. 95:4.

[52] B. Hor. 14a; see Chapter 2 above.

which the praxis learned by Rabbi Ishmael is tested on the simplest of people: "He returned and it was performed by me, and I did not believe it, until I brought a certain fool and he became equal to me. It was done again by the shepherds, and they became equal to me. They sent Rabbi Akiba out of the land [of Israel], by authority of a court, and he was detained until it was done by the populace, who could not read or recite, and they were made equal to advanced scholars [*talmide ḥakhamim*]" (§305). Here the wisdom acquired by the fools and shepherds consists in their newfound ability to read Scripture and recite mishnaic traditions, and their knowledge.

However, a much broader and more esoteric notion of wisdom is reflected in most Sar-Torah texts. This concept of wisdom has a mystical dimension and has its roots in apocalyptic texts and the wisdom tradition. But it is not unrelated to the scholastic dimension of those traditions.

Secrets

The Sar-Torah and Merkavah practitioners, like the mystagogue and apocalyptic hero, acquire a specific body of knowledge. They acquire knowledge of the cosmos and its inhabitants, and of the secret means for performing wondrous deeds. In the Sar ha-Panim incantation, the practitioner implores the angel to reveal to him "all the profundities of the mysteries of above and below and the secrets of the hidden places of above and the mysteries of understanding and the skills of perspicacity" (§634).[53]

Knowledge of the heavens and their workings is necessary for practicing the Sar-Torah rituals. When Rabbi Ishmael is rebuked by the Sar ha-Panim in *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* the narrator wishes to make it clear that without the specific knowledge of how to attract the heavenly hosts, Rabbi Ishmael runs the risk of angering the angels. Rabbi Neḥuniah's instructions in that text revolve around the details of the angelic personnel and the proper protocol for approaching them.

In the poetic preamble to the *Hekhalot Rabbati* Sar-Torah text, God declares that He will place His miraculous ways at the disposal of Israel so that they can acquire the Sar-Torah study techniques that facilitate learning. He will exercise His marvelous providential powers and extract divine secrets from His storehouses:

> For I am a Master of wonders and Lord of extraordinary deeds.
> Mighty deeds break forth before Me,
> miracles and marvels before My throne.

[53] Cf. the introduction to this ritual (§623), quoted above.

And who has come before me whom I did not reward?[54]
Who has called upon me whom I did not answer at once?[55]
State your supplications before me
and tell me profusely the desire of your souls. (§285)
There is nothing lacking in my treasuries and storehouses.
Utter your requests and they will be given to you,
and the desire of your souls will be fulfilled for you at once.
(§286)

The wisdom offered by the Sar-Torah praxis is, therefore, a form of divine knowledge. God is praised in this literature not only as the giver of Torah, but as the one who has stored up the secrets of the universe. These secrets are associated with the specific mysteries (*razim*) that are the rituals and divine names that the texts themselves present to the reader. The Sar-Torah prayer in *Merkavah Rabbah* and the introduction to *Ma'aseh Merkavah* provides an interesting illustration of this combination of themes:

You have revealed the secrets, and the deepest of secrets,
and You revealed the mysteries [*setarim*], and the deepest of mysteries
to Moses [. . .]
So that the children of Israel can engage in Torah with them,
and increase study[56] with them.

As has been pointed out above,[57] the secrets revealed to Moses and his successors consist not only of the Torah itself, but the magical means to learn it.

It must also be remembered that rabbinic literature attests to the idea that there is an esoteric dimension to the Torah. It is unclear whether the *raze Torah* mentioned in the passage from *Pereq Qinyan Torah* quoted above consist of cosmic secrets or the more intricate details of rabbinic learning. At Qumran, *nistar* was a specifically legal term for the aspects of the law that had not been revealed outside the high council.[58] Midrashic statements also make it clear that the Torah is vast enough to accommodate all such notions. Indeed, the Torah itself is said to be of literally cosmic dimensions.[59]

In his groundbreaking article on the concept of Torah in Hekhalot liter-

[54] Cf. Job 41:3.

[55] Cf. Cant. 5:6.

[56] Heb. *talmud*. Cf. §278.

[57] Chapter 7.

[58] See Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1975); idem, *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Courts, Testimony and the Penal Code* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 15.

[59] See Idel, "*Tefisat ha-Torah*," 41, and S. H. Kook, "*Godel ha-Torah ve-Yaḥasah le-Godel ha-'Olam*," in *'Iyyunim u-Meḥqarim* (Jerusalem, 1967), 108–19.

ature and later Jewish mysticism, Moshe Idel has gathered examples from a wide variety of sources of amoraic and early geonic provenance reflecting the idea that there are two levels to the Torah: an exoteric one—the manifest or written Torah—and an esoteric one, consisting of divine names interpreted from the text of the written Torah.[60] The principal source for this idea is *Shimmushe Torah.*[61] There Moses is said to have wrested the secrets of derivation of divine names from heaven over the angels' objection. While this specific technique of derivation of names from the Torah text is not reflected in the Sar-Torah literature, its analogue—that along with Torah the mystic or magician receives magical benefits—is a prominent theme in our texts.

Moreover, the equation of wisdom with knowledge of cosmology and angelology is an ancient idea with its roots in wisdom and apocalyptic literatures.[62] From those psalms in which a hypostatized wisdom declares her divine origins[63] to the "lists of revealed things" in apocalyptic texts,[64] there is a scribal tradition in which cosmology and esoteric subjects are included in the category of wisdom. The "guided tours" of apocalyptic texts are most probably the direct ancestors of the ascent and cosmological texts in the Hekhalot literature.[65] The innovation of the ascent texts in Hekhalot literature was to portray that journey not as a result of God's initiative, but of the active effort of human beings to visit those sights and attend the divine throne. In the Sar-Torah texts, however, the secrets of heaven have another function. They allow the practitioner to use that knowledge for bringing down the angel of the Torah. This angel, in turn, enlightens the practitioner with the capacity to discern the very cosmic secrets contained in that Torah itself.

This may be why redactors of Hekhalot literature included Sar-Torah materials together with ascent texts, although their goals and procedures were distinct. For the later redactors of *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* the Sar-Torah function of the literature was primary.[66] It seemed natural to them to incorporate Sections I and IV, an ascent text that includes lists of angelic names and enumerations of the heaven, because knowledge of those details was entirely consistent with the goal of the acquisition of Torah.

[60] Idel, "*Tefisat ha-Torah.*"

[61] See Chapter 7.

[62] See von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel;* Jonathan Z. Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic."

[63] See Job 28 and Prov. 8, on which see von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel,* 144–76.

[64] See Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things."

[65] See Himmelfarb, "Tours of Heaven."

[66] Cf. §544, in which the Sar-Torah hymn serves to introduce the ascent material in Section I; see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer,* 110; cf. the ascent passages in *Merkavah Rabbah* §§685–87, discussed above.

Scholastic Magic

For the authors of Hekhalot and Sar-Torah literatures, God is the source of Torah, of cosmic secrets, and of the specific techniques that the magician is now using to acquire them. In *Ma'aseh Merkavah,* this idea finds expression in a poetic prayer that reaches the point of lyricism:

> May I discourse in the gates of wisdom,
> and may I examine the ways of understanding,
> and may I gaze into the chambers of Torah,
> and may I discourse in the storehouses of blessing,
> and may they be stored for me.
> For wisdom is before You. (§569)

This prayer reflects a form of piety in which Torah and wisdom, residing in God's abode, are the chief joy of the petitioner. But this wisdom would also bring with it innumerable personal and social advantages. For if the Prince of the Torah were to descend to earth to transform the magician into a great scholar, he would also transform him into a powerful holy man. In talmudic society, the rabbi was known not only as a teacher and judge, but as a wonder-worker whose command of Torah endowed him with extraordinary powers.[67]

The authors of the Sar-Torah texts appropriated rabbinic values in remarkable ways. They maintained the scholastic virtues of Torah study, reverence for the teacher's authority, and emphasis on protocol. But unlike those rabbis whose magical power was said to derive from their mastery of Torah, the practitioners of the Sar-Torah sought to derive mastery of Torah through their magic.

[67] On the image of the rabbi as holy man and charismatic figure see Neusner, *History,* 4 and 5; Robert Kirschner, "The Vocation of Holiness in Late Antiquity," *Vigiliae Christianae* 38 (1984): 114–19.

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